THE SOUTH ISSUE

TIME

THE UNLIKELY RISE OF STACEY ABRAMS
By MOLLY BALL

WHAT DEMOCRATS DON'T GET
By DAVID FRENCH

LOVING A PLACE THAT DOESN'T LOVE YOU
By JESMYN WARD

THE RIVER'S CURRENCY
By WALTER ISAACSON

OLD GHOSTS, NEW FACES
By JON MEACHAM

31 PEOPLE CHANGING THE SOUTH

+

LAUREN GROFF
PAUL FINEBAUM
ACE ATKINS
STEPHANIE POWELL WATTS
GUSTAVO ARELLANO
JULIA REED
NATASHA TRETHEWEY

Georgia gubernatorial candidate Abrams in Atlanta's Piedmont Park

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FIND NEW ROADS
CHEVROLET

TIME

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ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

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Southern-minded

IT HAS DEFIED A THOUSAND OBITUARIES, THE region that winds from Virginia to Texas, through the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Smokies to the Delta, past the world's largest peach, the Astroturf grave of Hank Williams and the gates of Graceland. The "No South" is how Louisiana novelist George Washington Cable envisioned it in a commencement speech to the University of Mississippi's class of 1882. Books with names like *An Epitaph for Dixie* followed. Hodding Carter III, a son of Mississippi (and an early mentor of mine), carried the theme forward in a 1990 essay for TIME: "The South as South, a living, ever regenerating mythic land of distinctive personality, is no more," he wrote, declaring single-party politics dead and noting the emasculating effects of mass culture on regional identity.

Long after slavery's end, even as it became clear that the national shame of racial injustice was hardly unique to the region, the study of the ever-shifting Mind of the South has turned into an obsession—and a profession—for some. TIME devoted two prior issues to it, one in 1964, as the Civil Rights Act became law, and another in 1976 as Jimmy Carter hurtled toward the White House, the first President elected from the Deep South since the Civil War. But the debate over the New South has always been something of a straw man. As the historian Jack Temple Kirby explained in his book *Media-Made Dixie* (and as just about any Southerner knows from experience), the region is more layered, more diverse in culture and thought, than the stereotypes and much of the literature would have it.

"There are Jews in the South?" is still a frequent response to my telling anyone from the Northeast Corridor that I grew up in Memphis. And as a non-smoking social drinker who wouldn't know five-card stud from Texas Hold'em, I confess to reeling at TIME's apparent surprise in the '76 issue that Carter "is not a hard drinker, poker player or profane and garrulous see-gar-chomping raconteur."

YET IT'S HARD to deny certain enduring regional traits. One is the remarkable durability of single-party politics. The South, notwithstanding periodic head fakes, is today nearly as Republican as it was Democratic a century ago. Not only is it Donald Trump's largest and most reliable bloc of support, but the GOP controls every single Southern state legislature. When the Democrats lost their last Southern legislative redoubt, Kentucky, two years ago, the Washington *Post* declared the party "basically extinct in the South."

Distinctive Southern music, food and, to borrow from Julia Reed *(page 73),* a certain "never meet a stranger" civility, are also alive and well, despite recurring predictions that the region's ways would be absorbed into broader American currents. Instead, the South has become a net exporter of culture—and a net importer of people. Years of reverse migration and economic expansion have transformed the demographics and psychographics of cities like Charlotte, Nashville and Atlanta. The population of the South as a whole will soon overtake that of the Northeast and Midwest combined, growth that will almost certainly translate into greater electoral and congressional power.

The South has always been a place of more diversity and forward motion than many assume, a reality reflected in the stories of the extraordinary group of contributors to this issue, all of whom have intimate connections to the region. It's certainly true of my own story. A descendant of Confederate soldiers on one side and Holocaust survivors who met in Memphis on the other, I grew up, as we all did, on tragedy and promise, past and present, myth and music. It's the complicated story of the South, one that, as the fearless Mississippi novelist Jesmyn Ward puts it in the opening pages of our special section, "demands nuance, introspection and ruthless clarity."

BACK IN TIME
The magazine's July 17, 1964, issue was the second time William Faulkner made the cover; he knew, the 1964 story said, "what sets Southerners apart." The Sept. 27, 1976, issue returned to the subject in the age of Jimmy Carter.

Edward Felsenthal,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
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DOC TALK TIME editor-in-chief Edward Felsenthal recently sat down with artist and activist Ai Weiwei to talk about his documentary *Human Flow,* which depicts the worldwide refugee crisis that affected 68.5 million displaced people in 2017 alone. "None of these refugees willingly leave their homes," the artist said. "They have to. They are being forced out." To watch the full interview, visit **time.com/humanflow**

bonus TIME history

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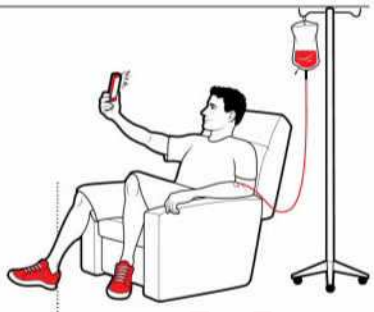
READING RECS To the dismay of its rabid viewers, *Game of Thrones* won't return to HBO until early 2019. TIME's entertainment team has compiled a list of seven book series to distract fans until they find out who will claim the Iron Throne—including a recommendation from *Thrones* author George R.R. Martin himself. Check out the whole list at **time.com/GOT-books**

REUNIFICATION ROAD A new TIME Red Border Films documentary chronicles the journey from an Arizona detention center to New York City with Yeni González—a Guatemalan mother who was separated from her children after she crossed the U.S. border—and the grassroots movement that brought her across the country to be reunited with her kids. Watch at **time.com/yeni**

‘THAT DIDN’T GO AS PLANNED.’

ROB SCHMITT,
host of *Fox & Friends First,* which mistakenly booked an interview with the wrong person; Massachusetts state senator Barbara L’Italien spoke against President Trump’s immigration policies until the network cut her feed



14

Months swimmer **Ryan Lochte was suspended from competition** for receiving a vitamin infusion in a quantity that violated United States Anti-Doping Agency rules

174 million

Age, in years, of a new dinosaur fossil found in the Lingwu region of China; the **previously undiscovered species has been named *Lingwulong shenqi,*** which means “Lingwu amazing dragon,” per a July 24 article in the journal *Nature Communications*

‘She’s the superhero we need right now.’

NICOLE MAINES,
actor and activist; she spoke on being cast as TV’s first transgender superhero on *Supergirl*

‘To blindly sign a deal like that and close your eyes to the human consequences is very chilling.’

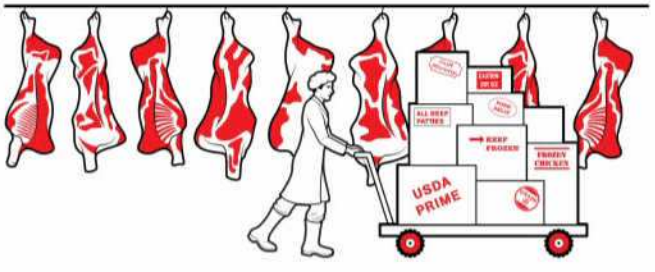
IVERNA MCGOWAN,
director of Amnesty International’s Brussels office, on a deal through which Italy will provide funds and equipment for the Libyan coast guard to take migrants back to Africa

‘HOW CAN YOU HAVE A SERVANT AT HOME WHO KEEPS THEIR OWN PASSPORT WITH THEM?’

SONDOS ALQATTAN,
Kuwaiti social-media star, on new laws that improve conditions for the country’s Filipino domestic workers; she faced a storm of criticism after making the comments in a video

2.5 billion

Pounds of meat, approximately, **sitting in storage warehouses** in the U.S., according to a federal report released on July 23; the surplus was traced, in part, to a decline in exports



Goldfish
Four Goldfish cracker types were recalled on July 23 amid salmonella fears

Blowfish
Hootie & the Blowfish played a reunion show in Atlanta on July 21

‘Well, I’ll have to pay him something.’

MICHAEL COHEN,
former attorney to President Donald Trump, in a September 2016 conversation with the then-candidate; Cohen’s tape of the conversation, which was obtained by CNN, records the two discussing purchasing the rights to Karen McDougal’s story of her alleged affair with Trump

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

SOURCES: THE GUARDIAN, BUZZFEED, NPR, WALL STREET JOURNAL, BBC

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The Brief

EXTRA? The New York *Daily News* covered its own sale last fall; the new owner has made drastic cuts

INSIDE

CUBA AIMS TO BUILD SOCIALISM, NOT COMMUNISM, IN A NEW DRAFT CONSTITUTION

A REPUBLICAN PLAN TO GUT THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT COSTS

DIRECTOR ANTOINE FUQUA REMEMBERS A SCREENWRITER'S UNIVERSAL STORIES

PHOTOGRAPH BY BEBETO MATTHEWS

NATION

Losing reporters where it matters most

By Karl Vick

THE NEW YORK *DAILY NEWS* WAS CUT IN HALF BY something called a Tronc. That sounds like the sort of thing you'd find in a tabloid, and there it was in the July 23 edition of "New York's Hometown Newspaper" on page 2: "News cuts staff. Half laid off in retool …"

Tronc turns out to be not a monster from the future, but a company from the past, Tribune Publishing, which renamed itself in a bid to remain relevant in a profoundly inhospitable present. That newspapers are a casualty of the Information Age may qualify as irony, but there are deep veins of tragedy involved, especially for communities that used to have a lot more people paid, by the local paper, to pay attention to what was happening there.

We all know why they're gone. The bad news about the *Daily News* was almost a day old by the time it appeared in its own pages. The announcement had been made at 9 a.m. the day before, as millions of office workers were sitting down at their desks, opening web browsers and toggling between work screens and whatever caught their attention on the web. A 2017 Pew Research Center study found that 67% of the U.S. population consumes the news in bits on social feeds and streams, rather than from anything brought in from the front porch or the bushes beside it. Daily newspaper circulation is right about where it was in 1940, a heyday for the printed word. The nation had only 40% of today's population back then, but the *Daily News* circulation was nearly 2 million; it's now one-tenth that.

A June report from Pew lays out the damage: newspapers' revenue from ads is where it was in 1981. Papers employ barely half the number of people they did 14 years ago, and pay them a median salary of $34,000. Regional papers that once vied for Pulitzer Prizes—the *Mercury News* of San Jose, the Denver *Post,* the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*—have been gathered up by hedge funds skilled at wringing profits from diminishing assets.

Only a tiny handful of papers, most visibly the New York *Times,* have remained vibrant by investing constantly in digital and persuading subscribers to pay handsomely for a top-quality product. But they are "national" newspapers, conspicuous as a check on the federal government; the *Times* saw a surge in subscriptions after Donald Trump was elected. As papers like the *Daily News* shrink or die, the local is what's left behind. Even the *Times* stopped publishing a Metro section.

"The thing I love about local news is that it doesn't scale," *Daily News* columnist Harry Siegel wrote the day before the cuts came. *Scale* is tech's magic word. Venture-capital firms are flush with money for the next idea that can grow from a person to a city to a region to … well, global domination is always the goal. And so scale is the opposite of city limits or school colors or a local housing authority, all of which matter a great amount to a relative few. "There's really no way to scale that reporting work or automate it or make it go viral," Siegel observed, then had fun imagining the effort: "This woman gave a disjointed speech in the form of a question at a community board meeting. What happened next will shock you!"

67%
Portion of American adults who in 2017 relied on social-media sites for at least some of their news, according to a Pew Research Center report

$34K
Median salary for American newspaper reporters in 2017, according to Pew analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data

9
Number of staff journalists remaining in the *Daily News* sports department, down from 34 prior to the cuts

SO WHO'S WATCHING town hall? Or our famously corrupt state capitals? Some communities are stepping in to try to salvage their local papers, often with the help of wealthy individuals. In Southern California, a UCLA surgeon turned billionaire named Patrick Soon-Shiong bought the Los Angeles *Times* and the San Diego *Union-Tribune* from Tronc in June. Local magnates purchased the *Star Tribune* in Minneapolis and the *Globe* in Boston. (Even Jeff Bezos' purchase of the Washington *Post* might turn out local; he bought a house in the city after buying its paper.)

But deep pockets don't change basic economics—people will not buy a classified ad to sell the bookcase they can advertise for free on Craigslist, and revenue from stories published online will always be diluted by the zillions of sites that also post ads. And depending on individuals comes with its own risks. Joe Ricketts, the billionaire behind the online website Gothamist, ditched it after the newsroom voted to unionize; it found a home at WNYC, New York's public radio station. (In a twist, Chance the Rapper—who has his own history of feuding with the media—announced on July 19 that he'd purchased sister site Chicagoist.)

For altruism, there does seem to be a certain refuge in nonprofits. Diligent ones are doing solid work both at the national level (in the newsroom of investigative journalists at ProPublica and the Marshall Project) and at the state level (Texas *Tribune,* Iowa *Watch*) and local (the Austin Bulldog, My Everett News). But news isn't all about altruism. Sometimes it's just what's interesting.

The story that brought Jarrod Warren Ramos into the undefended lobby of the *Capital Gazette* in Annapolis, Md., on June 28 had appeared seven years earlier, under the headline: JARROD WANTS TO BE YOUR FRIEND. It reported on a court case about his online harassment of a woman Ramos remembered from high school. Ramos stands charged with killing five people in that newsroom, which a few years employed dozens more. But the *Gazette*'s staff of 20 at the time of the shooting is nearly half the 44 who are being left to put out the *Daily News.*

Tronc stands for Tribune Online Content. In its statement announcing the layoffs, a senior executive said the company remains "committed to print." ◻

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BLAZING SUMMER A woman stands next to burned cars after a wildfire swept through the seaside village of Mati, near Athens, on July 23, killing at least 80 people. Greece declared a state of emergency in the region of Attica, where temperatures have exceeded 104°F this summer.

THE BULLETIN

Cuba moves away from its communist past and toward a modern future

CUBA IS SET TO TURN THE PAGE ON decades of communism, after lawmakers approved a rewrite of its 42-year-old constitution that would fundamentally reshape the island's government, society and economy. But although the document removes a national goal to build a "communist society," the party will still be in charge:

CONSTITUTIONAL OVERHAUL For the first time since the Cold War, Cubans will be able to own private property, strengthening a fledgling private-sector economy that now employs 12% of the workforce. The country will bring in age and term limits for Presidents and create a Prime Minister role, ensuring that future leaders will not enjoy the level of personal power that the late Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl exercised for 59 years, until Raúl installed successor Miguel Díaz-Canel in April. Social changes are also on the way, with same-sex marriage likely to be legally recognized.

LIMITED FREEDOMS Díaz-Canel says a planned public consultation and vote on the constitution show that Cuba is now a "genuine democracy." But one-party rule remains, and most ministers from the Castro days are staying on. Entrepreneurs say the government's progressive tone contrasts with its actions; in July it announced tighter restrictions on businesses after a yearlong freeze on new licenses. Chilly U.S.-Cuba relations will further temper foreign investment.

NEW WORLD Cuba is trying to adapt to a world very different from the one in which the 1976 constitution was written. The Soviet Union is long gone, and in ideological fellow traveler Venezuela, authoritarian socialism has collapsed into humanitarian crisis. Cuba's weak economic growth has not been enough to compensate the loss of its former benefactors and it has been forced to cut energy use and imports, making reforms more urgent. But leaders insist that they are "not renouncing [their] ideas," aiming for an incremental transition to a "prosperous" socialism rather than full-blown capitalism. Cuba is changing, but the party will set the pace. —CIARA NUGENT

NEWS TICKER

Destruction after Laos dam fails

At least 26 people died in southeastern Laos after **a billion-dollar hydropower dam collapsed while under construction** on July 23, flooding seven villages. Environmental groups have warned about the rapid pace of dam building as Laos seeks to become a major energy producer.

Classified Carter Page files revealed

The FBI and the Justice Department released previously classified files on the bureau's **wiretapping of Carter Page,** a foreign-policy adviser to President Trump's campaign. Legal experts say the files undermined claims Trump's allies made about the wiretapping; Trump argued that they "discredited" the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Kenya slum bulldozed to build highway

Authorities demolished the homes of some 30,000 people living in Kibera, Nairobi's largest slum, **to make way for a new $20 million highway.** Residents filed two legal challenges but lost when a judge ruled the road was in the public interest. They were given two weeks' notice to leave.

COSTAS BALTAS—REUTERS

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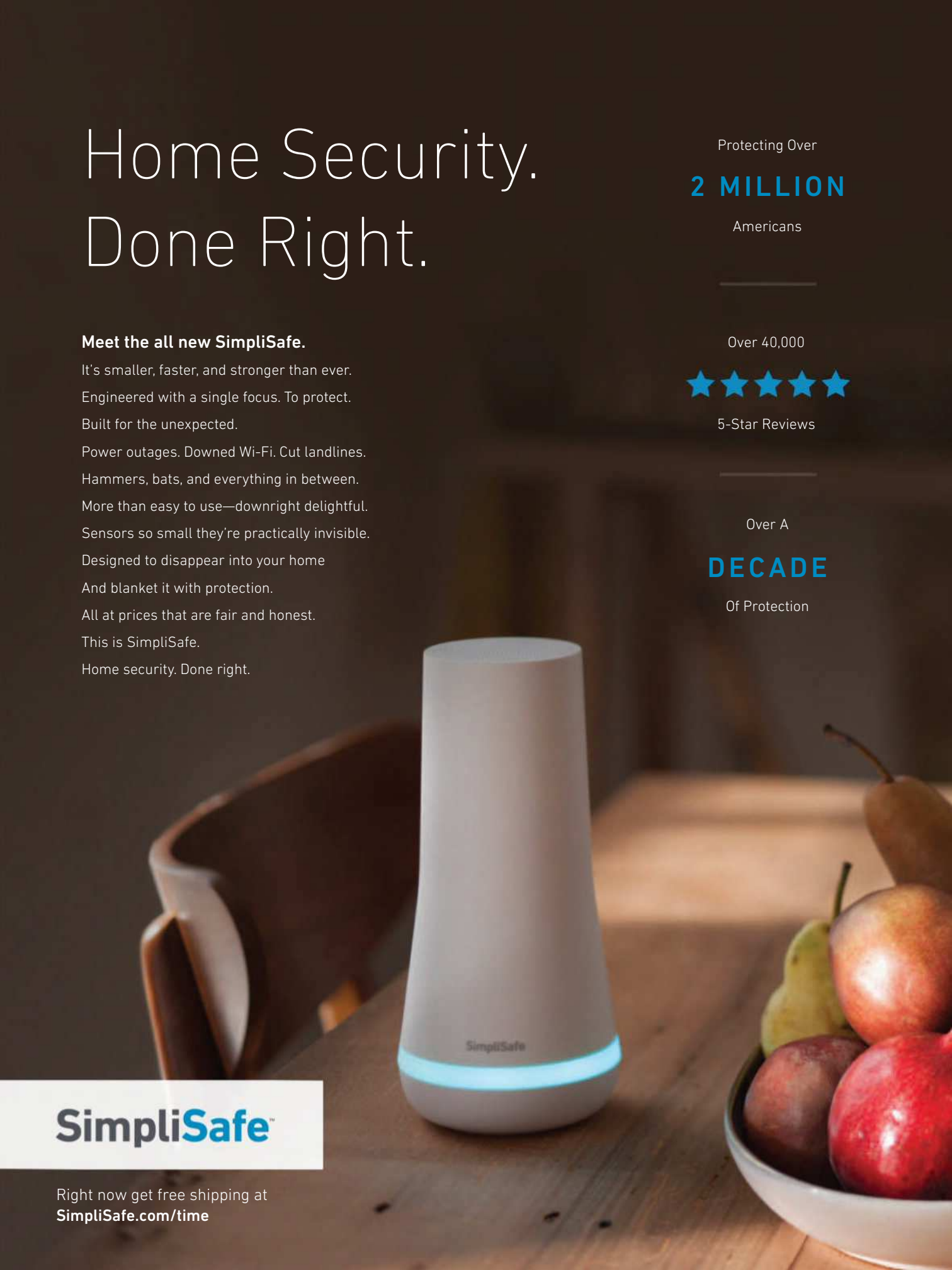

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NEWS TICKER

Veterans Affairs head confirmed

The Senate voted 86-9 to **confirm Robert Wilkie, Trump's pick for Veterans Affairs Secretary.** The department's 360,000 employees have been without a leader since March, and are struggling to provide care in the face of thousands of staff vacancies and high turnover.

Record levels of violence in Mexico

Mexico is on track to break its own record for murder for the second year running, after **homicides rose 16% in the first half of 2018.** Its homicide rate of 22 per 100,000 people is one of the world's highest, a problem traced to corruption, a shortage of police officers and the fragmentation of drug gangs, among other causes.

17 dead in duck-boat sinking

Seventeen people, including nine members of one family, died on July 20 when **an amphibious duck boat for tourists sank** during a heavy storm near Branson, Mo. Fourteen people survived, including the boat's captain. The incident has led to calls for regulation of duck-boat tours.

GOOD QUESTION

What are the real costs of the Endangered Species Act?

IN THE 45 YEARS SINCE PRESIDENT RICHard Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act (ESA) into law, conservationists have used the landmark legislation to protect millions of acres of land and bring animals—including the grizzly bear and the American alligator—back from the brink of extinction.

But despite its successes, the law is controversial, particularly for a range of industries that have argued for decades that that compliance places too high a cost on companies. Because the ESA specifies how humans can use land in ways that harm threatened or endangered species' habitats, some companies say its strict regulations are unnecessarily burdensome. On July 19, the Trump Administration delivered for those interests.

In 118 pages of technical documents, the Department of the Interior proposed making it harder to protect new land, adding rules that might allow regulators to ignore the effects of climate change and, perhaps most significantly, removing a ban on factoring in cost when deciding how and whether to protect a species. The measure joins proposed legislation from Republicans on Capitol Hill that would defang the law and, in some cases, explicitly remove some animals from the endangered-species list.

"The status quo is not good enough," said GOP Senator John Barrasso of Wyoming, chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee. Reforms "will promote the recovery of species and allow local economies to flourish."

Republicans see an opportunity to help key constituencies before the midterm elections. The oil and gas industry has complained that the law has halted the development of millions of acres of land. The logging industry has cited the law as a barrier to its growth. And farmers who own their land often complain that they cannot develop it.

Conservation groups and the environmental lobby disagree about the cost-benefit analysis. Though there are economic costs for those industries, they say there's a bigger picture. The ESA protects not only individual species but also entire ecosystems. Those ecosystems help ensure everything from clean drinking water to a hospitable climate, not just for select areas but the for the entire nation. A 2011 study prepared for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a government-affiliated conservation group, calculated the total value of those attendant benefits at about $1.6 trillion annually in the U.S.

The American people seem happy to bear added costs in exchange: multiple studies show that the vast majority support the law and would be willing to pay to preserve iconic species like the bald eagle. And experts argue there's no question proposed changes would hurt a law that must be strict to work. That pays off, says Jason Shogren, an environmental economics professor at the University of Wyoming: "We have to think about all the non-market benefits that exist, for knowing the web of life is intact." —JUSTIN WORLAND

ROYALS

Married to the monarchy

Japan's Imperial Household Agency asked Fordham University not to call its princess' intended her "fiancé" before their official betrothal. Here, royal-couple controversies. —*Abigail Abrams*

DUTCH MESS
Former Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands married German diplomat Claus von Amsberg in 1966—sparking protests because he had been a Hitler Youth member and fought for Germany in World War II.

ABDICATION
Edward VIII took the British throne in 1936 but abdicated soon after, in order to marry Wallis Simpson, an American divorcée, a move that was against royal rules. They stayed married until his death.

NORWEGIAN WOULD
Norway's Prince Haakon Magnus shocked his country when he said in 2000 he would marry Mette-Marit Tjessem Hoiby, a commoner and single mother. The two originally met at a music festival.

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LONGLISTED
Nick Drnaso's ***Sabrina,*** for the Man Booker Prize—the first time a graphic novel has been up for the most prestigious U.K. literary award.

ANNOUNCED
A **bid to chair the House Democratic Caucus,** by Representative Barbara Lee, a vocal progressive. If she succeeds, she'd be the first black woman to hold a leadership position in a major U.S. political party.

PLANNED
$12 billion in **emergency aid for U.S. farmers** hurt by foreign tariffs imposed in retaliation for President Trump's moves on trade, by his Administration.

ASSUMED
Ten seats in Colombia's congress, by **former FARC rebels** on July 20, as part of a 2016 peace deal. Outgoing Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos welcomed them and urged lawmakers to protect the peace.

FIRED
Russian soccer player **Erving Botaka-Yobama,** whose parents are Congolese, by the team Torpedo Moscow, after some of the club's fans unleashed an outpouring of racist reaction to news of his signing just days earlier.

ORDAINED
Most members of the **Thai youth soccer team** rescued from a flooded cave, as Buddhist novices on July 25. The ceremony traditionally demonstrates gratitude.

The food writer Gold on March 25

DIED

Jonathan Gold
Epicurean Angeleno

"IT IS THE COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR," BEGAN ONE OF Jonathan Gold's 2006 reviews, "and I am driving along Olympic Boulevard in East Los Angeles, ravenously hungry, looking for one of the itinerant flame-throwing taco carts that sprout in that neighborhood around midnight." Those words would help Gold become, in 2007, the only food critic ever awarded a Pulitzer Prize. But they also convey something of the man himself: unpretentious, lyrical, enthralled by his hometown, and always, always hungry.

Gold, who died on July 21 at 57, changed American food writing. In his long career reviewing for L.A. *Weekly* and the Los Angeles *Times,* he brought his intellect and experience not only to the city's tony dining rooms, but also especially to the no-name taquerias, Thai curry joints and strip-mall noodle houses that crisscross Los Angeles. He was driven by a deep understanding of how food creates community, and often said he hoped his reviews would help convince Angelenos to be more adventurous and less afraid of their neighbors. The legacy of this democratizing mission can be seen in the Instagramming foodies who prowl the world now for a taste of fish kidneys or pig-skin *pupusas.*

In that 2006 review, he paid tribute to the "great brotherhood of taco eaters" in Los Angeles, "huddled around trucks late at night, balancing three ounces of highly spiced meat and drawing furtively from an icy bottle of imported Mexican Coke." If that brotherhood exists, it is in large part because Gold created it. —LISA ABEND

DIED

Shinobu Hashimoto
Screen storyteller

By Antoine Fuqua

I FIRST SAW *SEVEN SAMURAI* AT some small theater in downtown Pittsburgh, and it took me to another place. The writing by Shinobu Hashimoto, who died on July 19 at 100, working with Akira Kurosawa and Hideo Oguni, was so beautiful and poetic and powerful and heartbreaking. It was all about justice, it was all about sacrifice, and it made me want to be one of those guys. I came from a rough area, and I had my own version of watching poor people getting pushed down—whoever the person was who had the power, they would come in and take from other people. And when I saw *The Magnificent Seven,* a direct take on *Seven Samurai,* again, I found myself wanting to be one of those guys. So when they called me from MGM and asked me about remaking it, I couldn't say no.

Seven Samurai, a foreign film from the 1950s in Japan, affected a boy from Pittsburgh living in the ghetto. That tells you it's a universal story about a universal reason that people fight for justice. The process between Kurosawa and Hashimoto, who also wrote *Rashomon,* wasn't about ego as much as it was about what's best for the story—and I keep seeing that story being told over and over again. A lot of people don't know Hashimoto's name, but his legacy will live on forever through his movies and the stories and the people who are influenced by them.

Fuqua directed 2016's *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Equalizer 2,* in theaters now

The movie poster for Seven Samurai *(1954), which Hashimoto wrote with Kurosawa and Hideo Oguni*

GOLD: ANNE FISHBEIN; SEVEN SAMURAI: TOHO/KOBAL/SHUTTERSTOCK

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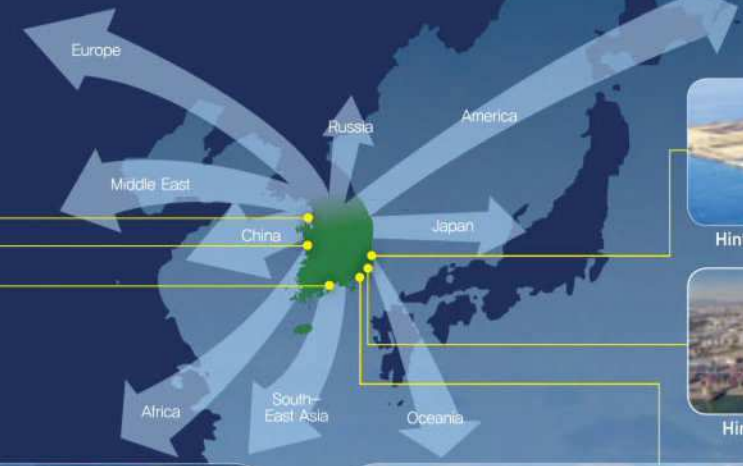

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Angela Bassett
refuses to let Hollywood put her in a box

By Eliana Dockterman

ANGELA BASSETT DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT herself. She does like to talk about the characters she has played—or, more specifically, inhabited. She swivels her shoulders as she recalls her Oscar-nominated role as Tina Turner in *What's Love Got to Do With It*. "Tina was Beyoncé before Beyoncé," Bassett says. "Those legs, that power, that sensuality, that undeniable talent." Then she shrinks her body while maintaining steady eye contact as she transforms into the civil rights icon from *The Rosa Parks Story*.

Finally she leans back and settles into the couch at a hip Manhattan bar that serves smoke-emitting cocktails in beakers. They're drinks designed to attract attention, but Bassett doesn't need a dramatic prop to draw an audience. (She'll have water, thank you.) Few actors carry themselves with such confidence. She speaks softly but firmly. You have to lean in to hear her, a trick she uses to intimidate Tom Cruise's secret agent Ethan Hunt while playing the director of the CIA in her latest film, *Mission: Impossible—Fallout* (out July 27). It might feel intimate if she didn't fill the room with such massive gestures as she describes her long career.

From 1992 to 1993, Bassett played Jackson 5 matriarch Katherine Jackson, Malcolm X's wife Betty Shabazz and Tina Turner, all in succession. She finished the '90s playing women who found inner strength after heartbreak—whether by burning a cheating husband's car in *Waiting to Exhale* or dancing her way into a new relationship in *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*.

During this time, Bassett achieved something rare: superstar status when meaningful roles for black women were scarce. "What does Hollywood want black women to be?" Hilton Als wrote in a 1996 profile of Bassett in the *New Yorker*. "Angela Bassett is a potential answer." Bassett was particular about her roles and through conviction and a little luck wound up embodying a series of powerful, if wronged, women. As for the effect those choices had on pop culture at large, "that's something for cinema classes to study," Bassett says. "It's an interesting proposition. But that's not for me to dissect. That's just far too much self-absorption."

Eventually, the same thing happened to Bassett that happens to many women as they age: Hollywood relegated her to supporting roles. Then Ryan Murphy came along. The prolific television writer has formed a coterie of female actors over 40. He has created juicy roles—often witches, murderers or divas who subvert stereotypes—for the likes of Jessica Lange, Kathy Bates and Connie Britton. Bassett signed on to portray real-life 1800s voodoo practitioner Marie Laveau in *American Horror Story: Coven*. She went on to appear in four seasons of his anthology series, earning two Emmy nominations in the process. She trusted Murphy so much that she signed on to star in another of his series, *9-1-1*, before it had a script. And in just one season, *9-1-1* has become one of the most-watched shows on television.

After Murphy came another Ryan. This time it was Coogler, a young director with just two films under his belt. Bassett added gravitas to his Marvel film, *Black Panther*, as Queen Ramonda, the mother of the titular superhero. "Ryan Coogler was a warrior. He didn't sleep," she says of filming. "And we were all there, warriors with him: whatever you need, because we all knew it was immense and important and a first. We knew it was about more than just us." Bassett and her husband, actor Courtney B. Vance, usually don't let their kids attend premieres. They made an exception for *Black Panther* because they wanted their children to see themselves as "potential panthers."

The trick to lasting in Hollywood, Bassett has found, is to keep good company. She chooses to work with emerging artists who—shortly after she films with them—are hailed as geniuses redefining the industry. Murphy tells the stories of older women and LGBTQ characters. Coogler made history with a box-office smash starring a primarily black cast. In between, Bassett worked with Lena Waithe on what became an Emmy-winning episode of Netflix's *Master of None*, based on Waithe's own coming-out story. Bassett is an outstanding actor. She may be an even better talent scout.

BASSETT'S MOTHER raised her to be exceptional. As Bassett grew up, first in Harlem and then in St. Petersburg, Fla., Betty Jane Bassett, a social worker, would tell her, "I don't have average children." Bassett mimes her response as a teenager to this mantra: she pouts, then smiles and then furrows her brow again, unsure whether to feel complimented or scolded. "Later on, of course, she said she didn't remember saying that," says Bassett.

Bassett attended college at Yale and remained on campus to get her master's degree when she snagged a coveted spot at the Yale Drama School. "We called it Yale Trauma School," says Bassett. Between classes, running lines and building sets, she didn't have time to eat, let alone sleep. "You subsisted on a bagel, coffee and cigarettes if you smoked them," she says. "They were breaking you down to build you back up. If you could hang on

ON HER ICONIC ROLES

What's Love Got to Do With It
"Everyone loved Tina Turner, not just folks in the black community. So if I got it wrong, I was going to have to live with that bitter pill for the rest of my life."

How Stella Got Her Groove Back
"For a while, [studios] just wanted movies about real women suffering. I was so happy when some fun fiction came along. I almost had forgotten how to do it: 'How would Stella do this? Oh, I can just make that up.'"

for that build-back-up-again part, it was a great experience. Some folks couldn't."

But Bassett would not be deterred. Even as a young actor with few options, she refused to be pigeonholed. After appearing in a series of historical dramas, she would seek out a lighter fictional role. When she felt like she was being offered hackneyed or demeaning parts in film, she would return to the stage. "We tend to put people in boxes because of gender, because of color, because of age, because of whatever," she says. "But I like to surprise people."

At 59, the boxes that the industry wants to put Bassett in have "gotten bigger." But they still exist. "I haven't auditioned since *What's Love,*" she says. She pauses. "That's not true. I auditioned for the play *The Mountaintop,* because the character was a 22-year-old, and I was 51 at the time. I had to go into the room and show them this transformation. I had the role before I got back to my hotel room."

Today she looks for scripts that portray aspects of women's lives that rarely get airtime. With *Master of None,* she says, "I had never seen that type of conversation between a black lesbian character and her mother." She was intrigued by Murphy's concept for her character on *9-1-1,* a police officer who has to navigate her personal life when her husband comes out as gay. And she raves about the roles for women in *Black Panther.* "You never know how *super* a superhero movie is actually going to be," she says, raising her eyebrows. But each Wakandan woman had her own personality and motivation: "The warrior, the genius, the wise counselor, the love interest who doesn't have time for love because she's got social work to do. For male writers, you have to love women to make four distinctive, powerful women's voices come alive and not sound like just one person divvied up."

As Bassett grew up, her mother would tell her, 'I don't have average children.'

Bassett has been picky, but lately she's also been prolific. This year alone she'll star in three movies and a television series. It's a sign of changing times and better material. And while young audiences may not know Bassett as Tina or Stella, they now know her as a queen, a cop and the director of the CIA. Not bad work if you can get it. ◻

MICHAEL BUCKNER—DEADLINE/SHUTTERSTOCK

The remaining war

When ISIS was routed last year from urban strongholds in Syria, the surviving militants there went underground to regroup. In May, backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, rebel groups began what was billed as a final push against ISIS. And elsewhere, forces supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad are reclaiming ground held by rebels for years. Caught in the middle are more than 6 million Syrians displaced within the country. Lorenzo Meloni's portfolio captures a region being slowly torn at the seams—including this October scene of a woman carrying her children from a food-distribution site near Deir ez-Zor. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands have fled to rebel territory along the Israeli-held Golan Heights; on July 22, Israel facilitated the evacuation of hundreds of White Helmets rescue workers.

Photographs by Lorenzo Meloni—Magnum Photos

For a longer version of this photo essay, visit time.com/fragments-of-war

City on the Rise

Together traditional and hi-tech industries boost the growth of a coastal city By Lu Yan

A showroom at Anta Sports' headquarters in Jinjiang, southeast China's Fujian Province

On October 15, 2017, in the city of Olbia on the Italian island of Sardinia, Laurent Petrynka, president of the International School Sport Federation, stood in front of a hushed audience as he opened the envelope containing the winner of the bid to host the Gymnasiade 2020, an international sporting event for young athletes. He pulled a card out of the envelope. It read "Jinjiang 2020."

Jinjiang, a coastal city in southeast China's Fujian Province, will become the second Chinese city to host the event after the 11th edition in Shanghai in 1998, its successful bid apt recognition of the city's development in the past few decades.

"I'm very excited and proud of my hometown," said Ding Shizhong, who, as chairman and CEO of Jinjiang-based Anta Sports, had a special interest in the outcome.

Anta Sports, which started in Jinjiang in 1991, has grown into China's leading sportswear brand, with more than 10,000 outlets and a market value ranked third in the industry worldwide after Nike and Adidas.

Jinjiang, which has prospered from its shoe industry since the launch of China's reform and opening-up program in 1978, is now on a mission to upgrade traditional sectors. Jinjiang's success is testament to how this pivotal policy has unleashed potential and continues to drive progress in China.

A shoe story

Jinjiang is the world's largest producer of sports shoes. According to the city's official statistics, one out of every five pairs of sports shoes worldwide is made in Jinjiang, home to over 4,800 shoe companies with some 280,000 employees. Many brands, including Anta, Xtep and 361 Degrees, originated in the city.

In 1986, Fei Xiaotong, a renowned sociologist, came up with the "Jinjiang Model," which called for the city's economy to be export-oriented and market-led, enabling businesses, whatever their ownership structure, to develop together.

The city's shoe industry began in the small satellite town of Chendai. As China's reform and opening up got underway, the country's markets began to come to life, and commercial opportunities mushroomed in Jinjiang. This port city along the ancient maritime Silk Road has a long tradition of international cultural exchanges and trade.

In Chendai, shoe manufacturing and retail boomed as entrepreneurs realized that shoes represented a lucrative combination of huge demand and relatively low production costs. Many took the plunge, embarking on the mass manufacturing of footwear. Later, as these businesses began to expand, some entrepreneurs realized that to differentiate their products from others on the market and stay ahead of their rivals they would need to build a brand.

Soon, more than 100 shoe brands emerged in Chendai and other parts of Jinjiang. Not all of them would survive the competition of the following years, but those that did thrived and went on to claim a substantial share of the domestic market.

Today the shoe industry constitutes one of the two industrial clusters in Jinjiang and its worth exceeds $15.2 billion. (The other major industry is textiles and garments.)

Chendai is now in the process of taking the industry to the next level by building a major market called the Jinjiang International Shoes and Textile City, which covers an area of 1,300 acres. Since it opened last October, more than 1,000 commercial tenants have moved in, selling raw and processed materials for shoe making such as accessories, fabric and leather.

"We target not only the domestic market, but customers all around the world," said Li Xiaohuan, general manager of the Jinjiang International Shoes and Textile City, adding that the goal is to build it into the largest shoe material trading center in Asia, with a complete and wide-ranging choice of products.

Ding Wanyu, manager of a company producing fabric for shoes, said the new market has helped business people like her reach international customers through trade fairs and exhibitions.

"We have established links with customers from South America and the Middle East, and I believe that continuing to upgrade our products to cater to customers' demands is the key to better business," she said.

Going global is an objective shared by many of Jinjiang's entrepreneurs. Anta Sports chief Ding Shizhong said that for a long time China's products were popular on the overseas market for their low prices, but that things were now beginning to change.

"Many companies are targeting upscale consumers with quality products that are being well received," said Ding. "For example, in March we launched a pair of limited-edition basketball shoes in San Francisco that were priced at nearly $160. Young people were queuing up to buy them. This is what 'Made-in-China' brands are capable of."

Despite this success, finding a way into the global market is not easy, and Ding is aware of the gap between Anta Sports and other global industry leaders.

DONG JING

XINHUA

Technicians run tests on new equipment at Fujian Jinhua Integrated Circuit

"This year we plan to visit the foremost technology companies in the United States and learn from them," he said.

Hi-tech power

Entrepreneurs like Ding Shizhong realize how important technology can be, and so does the Jinjiang City Government. According to a government report, the city has cultivated 85 hi-tech companies so far, and research and development investment now accounts for 2.65% of the city's GDP, up from 2.42% in 2011.

"But hi-tech industries account for a relatively small proportion of the city's economy," said Deputy Mayor Wang Wenhui. "Innovation-led development here is far from strong."

In 2016, the city began to develop the integrated circuit (IC) industry as a new engine of growth, in line with the national policy to advance IC technology.

According to Wang, Jinjiang will start with the production of memory chips, before going on to build an IC industry chain incorporating design, testing, manufacturing, packaging and terminal application.

"We plan to make the IC industry another industrial cluster worth more than 100 billion yuan ($15 billion) by 2025," Wang said.

A well-developed IC industry can help the city upgrade traditional industries and products, such as shoes, clothes, daily-use items and machinery. Wang revealed that local manufacturers have already explored the possibility of putting chips in shoes.

"Some companies are also trying to put chips in diapers to help detect and draw attention to children's bowel movements, and even check their physiological status," Wang said. He believes that traditional sectors provide a huge potential market for the application of hi-tech devices.

Xu Zheng, a former Silicon Valley engineer, recently decided to settle down in Jinjiang, a city with a population of 2.3 million.

"Jinjiang is a lot like Silicon Valley, a quiet place without the hustle and bustle of megacities, ideal for academic research," he said. "The traffic is not so bad here. If I need to take a plane, I can leave my home half an hour before boarding."

Xu is deputy general manager of Fujian Jinhua Integrated Circuit and is a key member of the team responsible for the company's growth. Established in February 2016, Jinhua has been working on a memory chip project and is one of the main sources of innovation in Jinjiang's burgeoning IC sector.

With talent pouring in, Jinjiang looks poised to enjoy the best of both worlds. "We hope that mature traditional industries can serve as a solid base for emerging industries, and that the advancement of the latter can bring a new look to the former," said Wang. ■

To learn more about developments in Jinjiang and other places across China, scan the QR code for *Beijing Review*'s special report on the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening up

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The View

SPORTS

BASEBALL'S LONG GAME

By Susan Jacoby

Baseball is a booming business, one with record annual revenues of more than $10 billion—yes, *billion*. Still, it faces a big problem: baseball has the oldest fan base of any major sport, and there is a dissonance between the focus and attention it demands and the habits of younger generations who expect action to be a click away.

INSIDE

WHY THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DOGS AND HUMANS IS SO SPECIAL

WHAT A NEW LAW REVEALS ABOUT THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER

THE BEST WAY TO GET PEOPLE TO TELL THE TRUTH, ACCORDING TO SCIENCE

Although it is difficult to make direct year-to-year comparisons because of the increase in viewing on digital devices, the trend over the past decade is clear in numerous studies, including the venerable Nielsen ratings. The average age of those who watch nationally televised Major League Baseball games rose from 52 in 2000 to 57 in 2016. (The average age of National Basketball Association viewers is 42.) Asked in a survey whether they followed baseball, nearly two-thirds of those ages 18 to 36 said no.

Michael Haupert, a professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse who studies baseball as a business, explains why many young people might be bored by what to an older and more knowledgeable fan is one of the most exciting experiences in sports: a no-hitter. "Failure is more common than success [in baseball]," he says. "If my students get a third of the answers right on their test, they flunk. If a ballplayer gets a hit a third of the time, he's often one of the stars." But watch an NBA game for 15 seconds, and you will likely see one team score.

Baseball is struggling to appeal to young people

It is not surprising that decreasing the length of games—about three hours in recent years—and increasing the pace of action has become a subject of contention among those who love baseball. MLB commissioner Rob Manfred is strongly committed to both. For the 2018 season, the league issued a set of new rules designed to do just that. Mound visits are limited. A timer countdown is designed to shorten the break between innings. New phone lines connect each club's video-review rooms and the dugout, with the supposed purpose of monitoring communications and discouraging sign stealing. (I must confess that I have always found stealing signs amusing—and something any team manager with a brain can find ways to discourage.)

The changes do not include a pitch clock—something Manfred wants and about which the head of the players' union, Tony Clark, is dubious. Limiting the time a pitcher has to deliver the ball to the plate would, in my view, fundamentally impede the psychological warfare between pitcher and batter that makes baseball—well, baseball.

No one knows if any of these changes will significantly shorten games. According to MLB, the average length of a nine-inning outing this season has been three hours—about five minutes shorter than the 2017 average, itself the longest mean on record.

ALL OF THESE proposed changes seem to miss the point. I interviewed at least 100 semi-fans in their late teens and early 20s for my recent book. All considered themselves fans to some degree, though they rarely watched more than snatches—on iPads or smartphones. They told me it made no difference whether a game lasted two or three hours: they would not pay attention for either amount of time.

The historic May 14 Supreme Court decision allowing all states to legalize sports betting could have an impact on all this. More people will soon be able to gamble on sports while watching a game on their couch. But whether easier gambling will attract more young people to baseball is a huge unknown. Many already gamble, both legally and illegally, on fantasy sports, but legalization will provide yet another distraction during games in real time. Will some states allow betting windows in ballparks or include betting reports in broadcasts? Will easier gambling make the young more likely to bet on baseball than on other sports? Stay tuned.

I don't know what will hook young people on baseball. But abandoning the game's unique selling proposition—the timelessness that provides both suspense and great conversation for the educated fan—is not the answer. Baseball, Clark told me, is like a game of chess—and too many simplifying changes might turn it into something "more akin to a game of checkers." Baseball may survive in spite of its challenges, precisely because it stands out and stands up against the short attention spans that adversely affect every aspect of our culture, including politics and education. As Casey Stengel is reported to have said, "Never make predictions. Especially about the future."

Jacoby is the author, most recently, of Why Baseball Matters

SHORT READS

Highlights from stories on **time.com/ideas**

Why dogs love humans

TIME's Jeffrey Kluger recounts the history of humanity's special bond with canines—one that is so great that we understand what they're barking about. "Think that's not a big deal?" he writes. "Then answer this: **What does a happy bird look like? A sad lion? You don't know, but dog talk you get."**

The overuse of breathing machines

Intrusive breathing tools are often used on older patients who may be nearing death, writes Dr. Kei Ouchi of Brigham and Women's Hospital, even though that may not represent their wishes: **"Most patients would [not] consider this arrangement an acceptable way of living . . .** yet so many of them experience it as their final form of life."

Breaking the breastfeeding stigma

Photographer Gina Brocker shares her portraits of women breastfeeding—at home, in public and in transit. She tells TIME, "I hope when people see this series, **if they are breastfeeding, they feel . . . empowered to do what they want."**

JULIE JACOBSON—AP/SHUTTERSTOCK

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THE RISK REPORT

Israel's Netanyahu takes a page from the authoritarian playbook

By Ian Bremmer

PRIME MINISTER of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu hasn't had an easy time of it lately. Israeli police have recommended bribery charges against him in two cases. In one, he's accused of accepting cigars and champagne in exchange for political favors. In another, he's accused of pushing legislation to undermine a newspaper in order to gain more favorable coverage from one if its commercial rivals. Several of his aides have been arrested. In June, prosecutors indicted his wife, a frequent media target for her alleged mistreatment of staff, on fraud charges.

So far, Netanyahu has kept his head above water. It seems he's learned a trick or two from relative political newcomer Donald Trump.

Netanyahu has long relied on a confrontational style to antagonize the left and beat back challenges from the right, but a move by his coalition on July 19 to declare Israel the "nation-state of the Jewish people" takes Trump's "give your people what they want most" tactic and "never apologize" personal style to a whole new level. The law states that "the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people." Jews will have democracy, and Arab Israelis will be forced to accept a downgrade.

Critics point out that Israel's founding Declaration of Independence guaranteed "complete equality of social and political rights" for "all its inhabitants," no matter their religion. It was of no avail to lawmakers. Those who oppose the law are left to speculate on how it might be used to boost settlement and other policies.

THE LAW IS just the latest sign that Netanyahu believes Israel stands in a strong position. When his closest foreign ally, Trump, carried out a fait accompli by ignoring naysayers to move the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, it seemed to represent a form of unconditional backing that Netanyahu never got from former U.S. Presidents.

In the Middle East, the Saudis are too busy antagonizing Iran to make trouble for Israel. Iran, Israel's most consistent foe, is isolated and under economic pressure. The Russians and Americans are only too happy to elbow the Iranians from their footholds in Syria—and to remain silent as Israel pounds Iranian positions there. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a frequent critic of Israel, has sharply denounced the law but is too busy at home to cause more mischief. And while Egypt's military-dominated government also criticized the law, it won't do much to help Palestinians who follow Hamas, a group it sees as an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood, which it hates.

Under Israel's 'nation-state' law, Jews will have democracy, and Arab Israelis will be forced to accept a downgrade

Palestinians themselves are bitterly divided over their future. Hamas has continued to launch attacks from Gaza that can only bring more suffering, and the Palestinian Authority, in charge of Palestinians elsewhere, has steadily lost public support.

At home, Netanyahu hopes to tighten his grip. Like the right-wing government in Poland, he is working to undermine the authority of his country's Supreme Court. Like the right-wing regime in Hungary, he has cracked down on civil-society groups. Like Vladimir Putin's Russia, he has expanded his country's territory—with de facto annexation of parts of the West Bank. Like Trump, he attacks critics in the media to divert attention from investigations of misconduct.

Meanwhile, Israel's Attorney General has never brought charges against a politician running for office during a campaign. If Netanyahu is indicted, he will probably try to buy time by calling elections this fall or early next year. That's what political street fighters do. ◻

LIFE SCIENCE

How to get an honest answer

If you ask me a question, you expect my response to be truthful. Otherwise, why would you even ask? But according to research, the way you phrase a question can affect whether people offer up the truth.

In a study from an article published in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes,* my colleagues and I asked lab participants to sell a used electronic device that had a serious malfunction. When the fictitious buyers inquired, "What problems does it have?", 89% of our sellers mentioned the malfunction. However, when asked, "It doesn't have any problems, does it?", only 61% of sellers did; when asked, "What can you tell me about it?", the rate fell to only 8%. We found similar results in other contexts, like job interviews.

So if you are worried about a potential problem, ask about it directly, even to the point of directly asserting that the problem exists and seeing if the respondent will contradict you. It may feel confrontational, but this can demonstrate that you are both smart and assertive, and could get you a more truthful response.

—Eric VanEpps, assistant professor of marketing at the University of Utah

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World

WAR OF WORDS

As America's long-running regional contest with Iran heats up, Trump and Tehran are fueling the fire with rhetoric, money and guns

By W. J. Hennigan

U.S. President Donald Trump and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani exchanged threats on July 22

TRUMP: DAN KITWOOD—GETTY IMAGES; ROUHANI: AP/SHUTTERSTOCK

Inside a stately boardroom at the Federal Ministry of Finance in Berlin last April, U.S. Treasury

Department officials meeting with their German counterparts described an elaborate Iranian operation that the Americans had uncovered. For several years, Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) had been using German front companies to buy advanced printing machinery, watermarked paper and specialty inks in violation of European export controls. The IRGC had then printed counterfeit Yemeni bank notes potentially worth hundreds of millions of dollars and used them to help fund its proxy war against the beleaguered pro-U.S. government in the capital of Sana'a. German companies, the Americans said, were being used as a cover by the Iranians to finance the world's worst humanitarian conflict.

The evidence, uncovered by U.S. illicit-finance investigators, was meant to sway the Germans, but not just in hopes of countering Iran's moves on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The larger mission, according to other Treasury documents later used in a presentation and reviewed by TIME, was to convince Berlin that Tehran cannot be trusted and that the Germans should join the Trump Administration in imposing economy-crippling sanctions on Iran. Weeks later, the American officials presented their hosts with one last set of documents: detailed blueprints on how the Trump Administration was preparing to unleash financial warfare on the Iranian economy.

For many, U.S.-Iran tensions are defined by President Trump's occasionally flamboyant outbursts, including a late July 22 all-caps tweet that appeared to threaten Tehran with military attack. But the low-grade confrontation between the two countries has been intensifying almost from the moment they and five major powers signed the landmark 2015 nuclear deal known officially as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). That deal brought Iran's nuclear program under tight international controls, but freed it from heavy sanctions. Tehran has been causing trouble for the U.S. and its allies ever since.

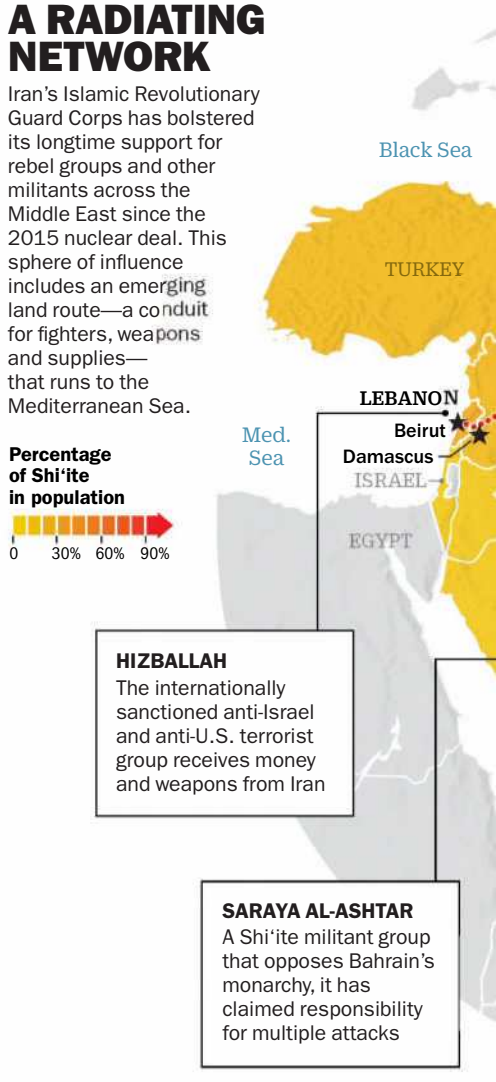
Iranian leaders used part of the windfall from the lifted sanctions, worth tens of billions of dollars, to expand the country's reach into the region, and further its role as the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, Administration officials say. Tehran is now involved in every single serious conflict in the Middle East, almost always on the side of America's enemies. Israel and Gulf nations have pressured the White House to address what they see as a growing Shi'ite sphere of influence across the Middle East with the IRGC bolstering its support for allied militant groups in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. Tehran is also said to have increased funding for Shi'ite insurgents opposing American allies in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. It also has continued to develop ballistic missile technology in defiance of the United Nations.

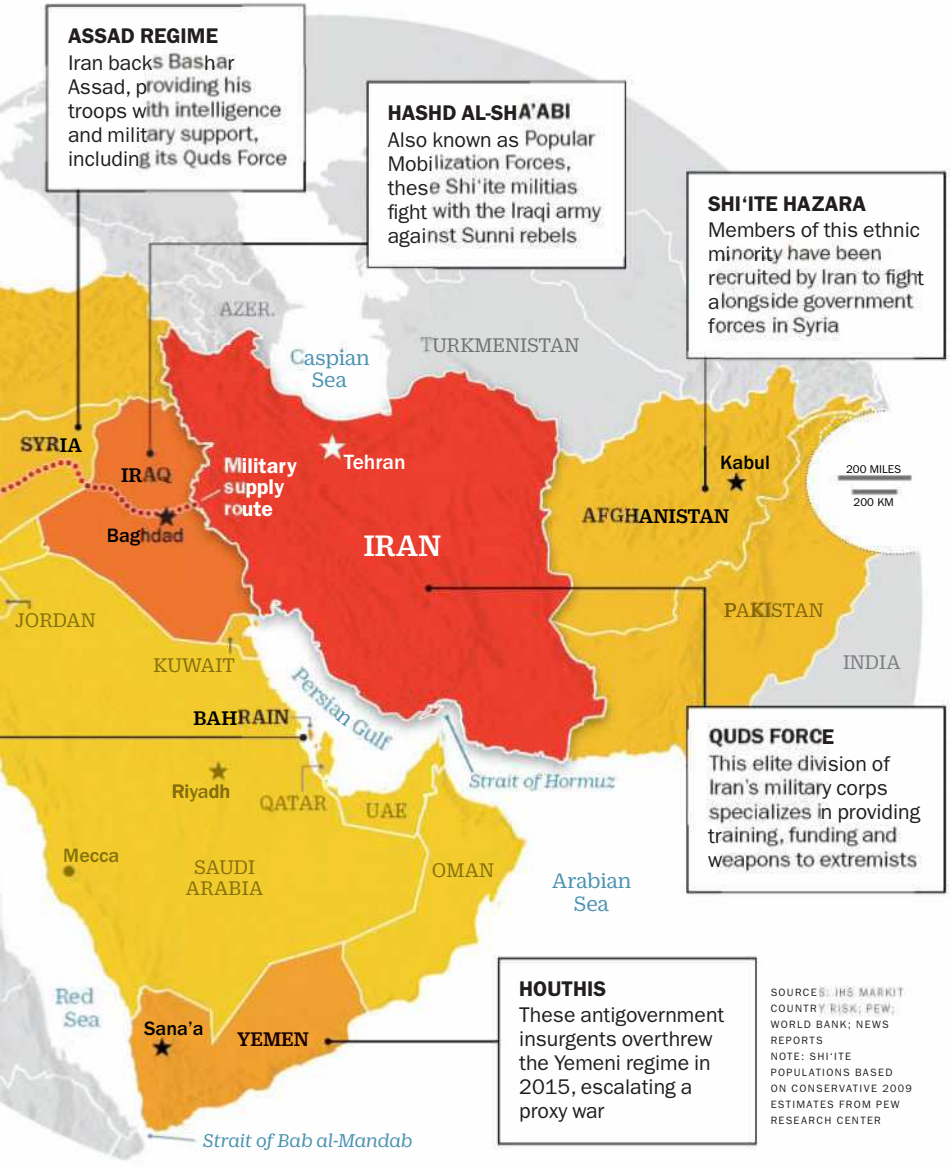
Even before Trump took office, the U.S. was responding to Iran's regional expansion with military, intelligence and diplomatic countermeasures. Trump's decision in May to walk away from the nuclear deal accelerated the confrontation. And Trump's campaign for "maximum economic and diplomatic pressure"—quietly unveiled by U.S. officials in international capitals across Europe, the Middle East and Asia—is bringing matters to a head as an Aug. 6 deadline for the new sanctions approaches.

The stakes rise with the confrontations. U.S. allies have been warned during road shows like the one last April in Berlin that if they don't join the new campaign, their countries' companies are susceptible to Iranian schemes, and after August 6 they could be slapped with U.S. sanctions for doing business with Tehran. Everyone from French energy giants to South Korean petrochemical companies are weighing the cost of rolling back three years of investment in Iran against losing access to the exponentially larger U.S. economy. As a business decision, it's not a hard one. More than 50 companies in all major industries have already committed to leaving the Iranian market by August, U.S. officials say.

The run for the door has intensified pressure on Iran's already battered economy. The value of its currency, the rial, collapsed to a record low of 90,000 rials to the U.S. dollar—a nearly 50% drop since Trump left the nuclear deal. In an economy based on petrodollars and heavy importing, most Iranians effectively lost half of their wealth, as prices soared for everything from daily goods to cars. On June 25, after the government banned the import of 1,300 foreign goods to battle inflation, merchants in Tehran's Grand Bazaar shuttered their businesses. Protests spread from Tehran to other cities.

Unrest is just what the Trump Administration is hoping for. The White House believes new sanctions will drive middle- and lower-class Iranians to pressure the central government to redirect wealth from foreign adventures to domestic spending. "After our sanctions come in force," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in May at the Heritage Foundation, a right-leaning Washington think tank,


A RADIATING NETWORK
Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has bolstered its longtime support for rebel groups and other militants across the Middle East since the 2015 nuclear deal. This sphere of influence includes an emerging land route—a conduit for fighters, weapons and supplies—that runs to the Mediterranean Sea.
Percentage of Shi'ite in population
0
30%
60%
90%
Black Sea
TURKEY
LEBANON
Beirut
Damascus
ISRAEL
EGYPT
Med. Sea
HIZBALLAH
The internationally sanctioned anti-Israel and anti-U.S. terrorist group receives money and weapons from Iran
SARAYA AL-ASHTAR
A Shi'ite militant group that opposes Bahrain's monarchy, it has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks



"Iran will be forced to make a choice: either fight to keep its economy off life support at home or squander precious wealth on fights abroad. It will not have the resources to do both."

But the U.S. faces risks too. Russia and China are opposing the U.S. sanctions push, and most other countries still support the 2015 deal and are looking for ways around the Trump Administration crackdown. If they find them, and the U.S. looks ineffectual, it could weaken American diplomatic and economic clout around the world.

Even success could prove costly. National Security Adviser John Bolton has long advocated toppling the Iranian leaders, and while the Administration no longer espouses that policy openly, many suspect regime change is the ultimate goal of the sanctions. Few who lived through the bloody aftermath of America's 2003 invasion of Iraq have forgotten how costly messy leadership changes in the Middle East can become.

ON JULY 24, 2015, 10 days after the Iran nuclear deal was signed, an airliner carrying Major General Qassem Soleimani touched down in Moscow. As commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, a designated terrorist organization, Soleimani wasn't supposed to be allowed to fly commercially—U.N. Security Council resolutions barred him from leaving Iran. Yet there he was, according to former and current U.S. officials, meeting with senior Russian military leaders to pitch an audacious plan: together Moscow and Tehran could team up to save the forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad, which were nearing defeat at the hands of rebel groups.

Soleimani, who reports directly to Iran's supreme theocratic ruler, Ayatullah Khamenei, had already organized, funded and deployed Shi'ite militias—many from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Lebanon—to help Assad. What he needed was air power. He got it. By that October, Russian warplanes were striking rebel positions daily from above while Iranian special forces were leading operations on the ground. The military moves triggered by Soleimani's Moscow visit, the officials say, fundamentally changed the trajectory of the Syrian war in Assad's favor.

And Iran was only getting started. For the previous five years, it had labored under a U.S.-led crackdown on its banking and financial sectors designed to coerce it to abandon its nuclear program. But six months after the July 2015 deal, the sanctions came off and money began flowing again, including billions in cash assets previously frozen by the U.S. Firms from Europe and the U.S. began to invest—albeit cautiously. Iran's oil exports started a steady climb to their current 2.7 million barrels per day. All told, Iran profited by tens of billions of dollars from the deal—and $16 billion went to regional proxies, according to a senior State Department official.

National pride, including memories of Persian empires, also figures in Iran's regional ambitions. But there is little doubt, says Nathan Sales, counterterrorism coordinator at the State Department, that "you're seeing an intensification of Iranian support for terrorism and other malign activity." U.S. State Department officials estimate that in Syria alone, Tehran floated Assad more than $4 billion in credit to purchase oil and other goods from Iran, munificence that would not have been possible without JCPOA sanctions relief on Iran's economy.

The result has been expanded influence inside Syria, where the IRGC is regarded by some analysts as being in control of Assad's ground forces. That in turn has raised fears of pervasive Iranian influence that Sunni rulers warned would come into being after the U.S. invaded Iraq. Already, Tehran had used the U.S. ouster of Iraq's despot, Saddam Hussein,

to establish militia networks there. Now its overland supply route runs from Tehran, across Iraq and Syria, to Lebanon, a route replacing air cargo flights as a supply corridor.

Of all the Shi'ite militias in the region, Hizballah in Lebanon has gained the most from Iran's post-JCPOA ascendancy. A U.S. State Department official estimated Iran's support at $700 million a year. Hizballah has received weapons, training facilities in Iran and direct financial support since the early 1980s, when Iran helped establish it. It posts photos of Iran's leaders in territory it controls, and flies a flag inspired by the IRGC emblem. The group is both deeply rooted in Lebanon's Shi'ite population, and a clear proxy for Iran on the Mediterranean.

Iran's ascendance presents an immediate problem for Israel, America's closest ally in the region and Tehran's mortal enemy. Iran's forces in Lebanon and Syria, which border Israel, have been attacked by Israeli jets, enforcing Israel's pledge to protect its borders "until the last millimeter." Israel has launched airstrikes for several months that target groups arrayed to the north and northwest of the border. Israel even attacked a convoy of Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'ite militiamen crossing into Syria near Deir ez-Zor—some 500 miles away from the Israeli border.

Israel isn't the only U.S. ally in the region to confront resurgent Iranian proxies. In Bahrain, which was once a part of Iran and now hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, the IRGC has found proxies in Shi'ite groups like al-Ashtar Brigades. In Yemen, the war escalated by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in 2015 has boosted Iran's relationship with the rebels known as Houthis. They have received long-range missiles which were then fired into Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. Navy and allies have intercepted weapons shipments from Iran headed to the Houthis.

Shoppers at Tehran's old Grand Bazaar on July 23. Weeks earlier, it temporarily closed over economic protests

EBRAHIM NOROOZI—AP/SHUTTERSTOCK

THE U.S. MILITARY has thus far avoided direct confrontation with Iranian forces—even when small Iranian boats and drones routinely pestered American naval ships at sea. (The U.S. military said that behavior abruptly—and inexplicably—stopped this year.) Instead, the U.S. is working to expose Iran's activities and help America's allies. "We do consider Iran to be the most destabilizing actor across the region," General Joseph Votel, commander of all U.S. forces across the Middle East, told reporters July 19. "And our efforts across the region have been on exposing their activities and then working with partners to stop or disrupt them."

In addition to naval interdictions off the coast of Yemen, the Trump Administration has provided intelligence, munitions and midair refueling to Saudi warplanes operating against the Houthis. In Syria, the U.S. maintains a remote Special Operations base at Al Tanf, in the country's southeast, at a strategic intersection where the borders of Syria, Iraq and Jordan meet that serves as a physical obstruction against Iranian expansion. And at every turn, Trump has backed Israel's efforts to attack Iran.

The greater U.S. push has come on the economic battlefield. Under the reimposed American sanctions, companies that invested in Iran have a brief window to wind down business ties before incurring penalties. The first group of sanctions on Iran's automotive sector, gold trade and other industries will "snap back" beginning on Aug. 4.

The real economic pain will begin Nov. 6 when a more rigorous set of sanctions on oil and transactions with the central bank of Iran come into effect. Iran currently exports around 1 million barrels of oil per day to Europe, and nearly 2 million to Asian countries like China, India, South Korea and Japan. Importers of Iranian oil have already reduced their purchases about 8% in the past two months amid Trump Administration efforts.

No one expects a full return to the level of international sanctions that were in place prior to the nuclear deal—a prodigious, nearly global and ultimately successful effort aimed at forcing Iran to the negotiating table. But the U.S. wields great power even alone. French energy giant Total is preparing to walk away from a $47 million investment

in Iran's South Pars gas field under the threat of U.S. sanctions. It's happening despite the French government's belief, along with all other signatories, that Iran is fully complying with the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal. "There's a difference of opinion about the JCPOA itself, but I wouldn't infer that there's a difference of opinion in countering Iran's malign activities," said Sigal Mandelker, Treasury's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, who has been traveling to European and Middle Eastern capitals on the Trump Administration's road shows. "For us, we have conversations with our European counterparts about the aggressiveness with which we're going to enforce our authorities."

The U.S. moves already appear to be having an effect. Analysts at BMI Research project that Iran's economy will grow just 1.8% this year, down from a prior forecast of 4.3% before Trump pulled out of the nuclear deal. Some experts say U.S. economic expect more companies to join Trump's crackdown. "The fact of the matter is, when foreign firms are forced to choose between business with Iran and access to the U.S. financial system, they are going to choose the latter," said Daniel Glaser, a former Assistant Treasury Secretary for Terrorist Financing in the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence.

Tehran is doing what they can to push back. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Javad Zarif, his Western-educated Foreign Minister, have traveled throughout Europe in search of commitments from leaders there, but have yet to secure them. "We see that under pressure from the U.S., under the psychological atmosphere that the U.S. has tried to create, some European companies have already started to withdraw," Zarif told to Euronews in a July 19 interview.

The leadership is right to worry. The new round of protests over Iran's economic woes poses a challenge to Rouhani's government, which was twice elected on the promise that a nuclear deal would result in integrating the country into the global economy. And there are more signs the Iranian people are growing weary of their government's foreign military intervention. On June 25, protesters chanted "Death to Palestine," a noticeable about-face from the chants most often heard in Tehran: "Death to Israel."

The unrest may predate Trump's withdrawal from JCPOA, but that doesn't mean he can't use it. The U.S. government recently unveiled plans to create an around-the-clock Farsi channel that promotes Western propaganda on television, radio, and social media. "Trump is gambling that this regime is extremely unpopular at home," said Alex Vatanka, an Iran expert at the Middle East Institute. "A lot of this is psychological. The Administration has made the determination that there are real cracks inside this Iranian society, so why not tap into it?"

All of which helps explain the mounting tensions between Tehran and Washington. Rouhani revived a threat to shut down international oil shipments in the strategic Strait of Hormuz if Washington continued to provoke Tehran, a step that would almost certainly trigger war. Meanwhile, U.S. officials told NBC News in July that Iran has "laid the groundwork" for cyberattacks against electric grids, water plants and tech companies in the U.S. and Europe.

There have been other provocations. An Iranian diplomat based in Vienna was among six people arrested in connection with a foiled bombing attack on a conference of opponents of the Tehran regime that was to be held in a town north of Paris. Israel's Mossad spy agency claimed it had alerted European authorities of a cell led by the diplomat. A Belgian couple of Iranian origin was arrested with homemade explosive and a detonation device found in their car. Iran said it had nothing to do with the plot, calling it a staged "false flag" operation.

Finally, on July 22, Rouhani spoke out in rare bellicose terms more often heard from Iran's Supreme Leader. "Mr. Trump, do not play with the lion's tail, this will only lead to regret," Rouhani said, according to the state-run news agency IRNA. "America must understand that peace with Iran is the mother of all peace and war with Iran is the mother of all wars." That triggered Trump's all-caps tweet the same day: "NEVER, EVER THREATEN THE UNITED STATES AGAIN OR YOU WILL SUFFER CONSEQUENCES THE LIKES OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE EVER SUFFERED BEFORE."

Trump's tweet also had a domestic context—it changed the subject from fallout from his Russia summit. But critics say the President's entire approach to Iran runs a steep risk. "There's so much friction between Iran, the U.S. and their respective allies throughout the region," said Ali Vaez, the Iran project director at the International Crisis Group. "There's so many flash points that a single miscalculation could result in a confrontation that could easily spiral out of control." A wider war with Iran might stoke bloody sectarian violence across a region already reeling through nearly three decades of nonstop conflict. Some experts also fear a smaller, targeted threat against U.S. interests, perhaps an Iranian-backed militia attack against isolated U.S. forces, on a remote base in Syria.

With the August sanctions looming and tougher ones on track in November, the break in tensions seems likely. Especially between governments that, even in the best of times, cast the other as a reliable villain. ◻

Gaudí's Sagrada Familia was one of the top attractions for the 32 million who visited Barcelona in 2016

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAOLO VERZONE FOR TIME

World

THE TOURISM TRAP

AS VACATIONERS THREATEN TO TURN EUROPE INTO A THEME PARK, THE CONTINENT IS PUSHING BACK

BY LISA ABEND/VENICE

IN GIOVANNI BONAZZON'S PAINTINGS, Venice is a vision of serenity. Bridges arch gracefully over rippling canals, sunlight bounces off flower-filled balconies, and not a single human mars the tranquility.

Bonazzon's daily vista is not as tranquil, however. An artist who paints and sells watercolors from an easel set up near San Marco Square, he has a ringside seat to the selfie-posing, ice-cream-licking hordes who roil their way daily toward the Doge's Palace, and he readily agrees that tourism is killing his hometown.

Yet when he heard that Venice Mayor Luigi Brugnaro had, in the run-up to a busy weekend at the beginning of May, installed checkpoints intended to block arriving visitors from especially crowded thoroughfares (while allowing locals through), Bonazzon was dismayed. "Yes, they should control the tourists," he says. "But they shouldn't close Venice. We're a city, not a theme park."

That's a refrain echoing in a growing number of European cities. The neoclassical gems that once made up the grand tour have been stops on package tours since the 19th century. But it's only over the past decade or so that the number of travelers to these and other must-see destinations risks subsuming the places. Around 87 million tourists visited France in 2017, breaking records; 58.3 million went to Italy; and even the tiny Netherlands received 17.9 million visitors.

It's happening nearly everywhere. Asia experienced a 9% increase in international visitors in 2016, and in Latin America the contribution of tourism to GDP is expected to rise by 3.4% this year. Even a devastating hurricane season couldn't halt arrivals in the Caribbean, where tourism grew 1.7% in 2017. (The U.S., on the other hand, has seen foreign tourism drop, partly because of a strong dollar.)

But Europe is bearing the brunt. Of the 1.3 billion international arrivals counted by the U.N. worldwide last year, 51% were in Europe—an 8% increase over the year before. Americans, in particular, seem drawn to the perceived glamour and sophistication of the Old Continent (as well as the increased spending power of a strong currency). More than 15.7 million U.S. tourists crossed the Atlantic in 2017, a 16% jump in the space of a year.

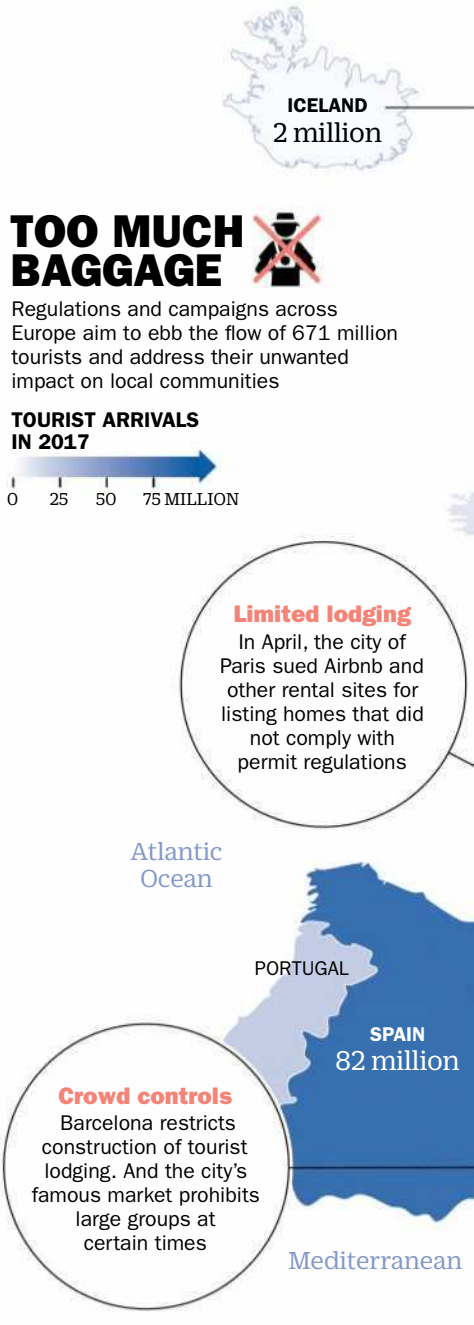
With tourism in 2018 expected to surpass previous records, frustration in Europe is growing. This past spring witnessed antitourism demonstrations in many cities throughout Europe. On July 14, demonstrators in Mallorca, Spain, conducting a "summer of action" greeted passengers at the airport with signs reading TOURISM KILLS MALLORCA.

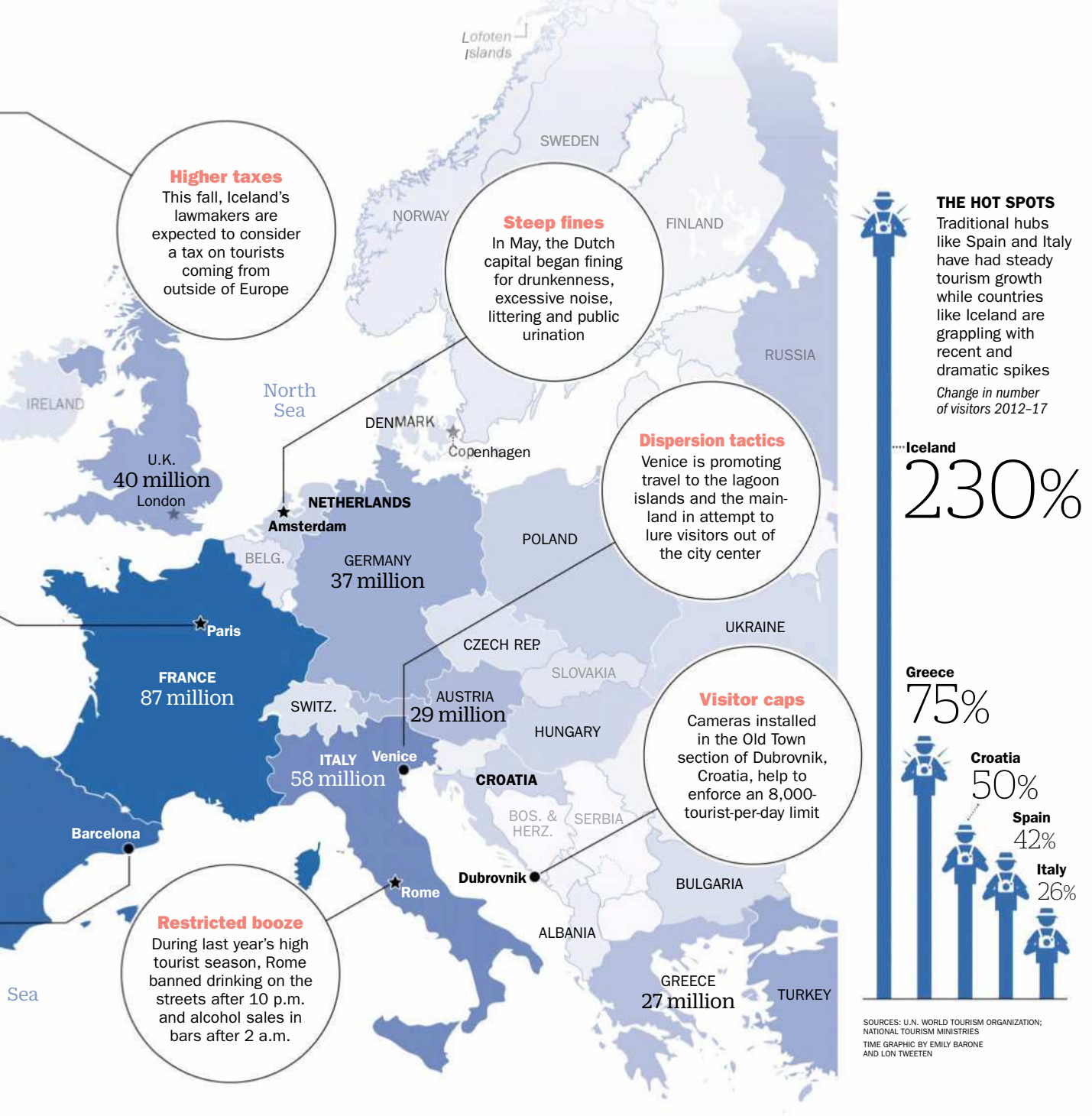
Now, local governments are trying to curb or at least channel the surges that clog streets, diminish housing supplies, pollute waters, turn markets and monuments into no-go zones, and generally make life miserable for residents. Yet almost all of them are learning that it can be far more difficult to stem the tourist hordes than it was to attract them in the first place.

THE REASONS for this modern explosion in tourism are nearly as numerous as the guys selling selfie sticks in Piazza Navona. Low-cost airlines like easyJet, Ryanair and Vueling expanded dramatically in the 2000s, with competitive ticket prices driving up passenger numbers. From 2008 to 2016, the cruise-ship industry in Europe exploded, growing by 49%. Airbnb, which launched in 2008, made accommodations less expensive. Rising prosperity in countries like China and India has turned their burgeoning middle classes into avid travelers. Even climate change plays a role, as warmer temperatures extend summer seasons and open up previously inaccessible areas.

But the cities and local governments here also share responsibility for the boom, having attempted to stimulate tourism to raise money. In the decade since the financial crisis began, tourism has come to be seen by European countries as an economic lifesaver. The industry generated $321 billion for the E.U. in 2016 and now employs 12 million people. Governments in cities like Barcelona spent heavily to attract tourist dollars. "For decades, the government here was using tons of public money to attract cruise lines, new hotels, new airlines," says Daniel Pardo, a member of the city's Neighborhood Assembly for Sustainable Tourism. "But they didn't think about the repercussions."

Barcelona is one of the cities that got more than it bargained for. Every day in high season now, four or five cruise ships dock in the Catalan capital, spilling thousands of passengers at the base of


ICELAND
2 million
TOO MUCH BAGGAGE
Regulations and campaigns across Europe aim to ebb the flow of 671 million tourists and address their unwanted impact on local communities
TOURIST ARRIVALS IN 2017
0
25
50
75 MILLION
Limited lodging
In April, the city of Paris sued Airbnb and other rental sites for listing homes that did not comply with permit regulations
Atlantic Ocean
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
82 million
Crowd controls
Barcelona restricts construction of tourist lodging. And the city's famous market prohibits large groups at certain times
Mediterranean



the famous Rambla Boulevard. "You can't walk there," Pardo says. "You can't shop at the Boquería market. You can't get on a bus, because it's packed with tourists."

Over the past few years, Barcelona has begun taking action to improve tourist behavior, like fining visitors who walk around the city center in their bathing suits. The current mayor, Ada Colau, has dramatically intensified that action. In January 2017, her government prohibited the construction of new hotels in the city center and prevents their replacement when old ones close. Cruise ships that stop for the day may struggle to get docking licenses, as the city prioritizes those that begin or end their journey in Barcelona. Tour groups can now visit the Boquería market only at certain times, and the city is considering measures to ensure locals can still buy raw ingredients there—and not just smoothies and paper cones of ham.

"There is a risk that some areas of the city, like Sagrada Familia or the Boquería, will become amusement parks," says Agustí Colom, the city councilman for tourism. "But we're still in time to save them. We understand that Barcelona cannot become an economic monoculture."

OTHER PLACES are also turning to the law to reduce the number of globetrotters. Ever since its medieval center stood in for King's Landing on *Game of Thrones*, the walled Croatian city of Dubrovnik has been overwhelmed by fans of the HBO series. In 2017, Dubrovnik limited the number of daily visitors to 8,000; its new mayor now seeks to halve that amount. Amsterdam, whose infamous drug culture and picturesque canals drew at least 6 million foreign visitors to the city in 2016, has adopted a carrot-and-stick approach. The Dutch capital has introduced fines for rowdy behavior and

PREVIOUS PAGES: AGENCE VU

banned the mobile bars known as "beer bikes," while simultaneously attempting to lure visitors to less congested sites like Zandvoort, a coastal town 17 miles from the city center that has been rebranded Amsterdam Beach, through apps and messaging systems.

The city has also raised its tourist tax to 6%, joining several other cities and some countries that aim to control visitor numbers with higher levies. At the start of 2018, Greece imposed its first tourist tax, which ranges from roughly 50 cents a night to four euros. In Iceland, which receives nearly seven times as many visitors as it has residents, lawmakers will consider a tax this fall on tourists coming from outside of Europe.

Yet even in liberal Europe, not every government is willing to raise taxes. Authorities in the Lofoten Islands in northern Norway beseeched the government to raise levies after more than a million tourists visited in 2017, thanks in part to the movie *Frozen*. The 25,000 inhabitants found their single main road and its sparse facilities completely overwhelmed.

When Norway said no to higher taxes, the locals were forced to take matters into their own hands. "We've organized community volunteers to build trails and haul trash," says Flakstad Mayor Hans Fredrik Sordal. "In summer, we're opening the school toilets to the public. And we're asking tourists for volunteer contributions."

For locals in these places, anger at the ever-expanding rates of tourism can be placated by the money there is to be made out of catering to them. The advent of Airbnb has created a revenue stream for city-center residents with spare bedrooms and second properties. The company sees itself as an answer to tourism overcrowding rather than a net contributor. "We are convinced our community can be a solution to mass tourism," wrote company founder Nathan Blecharczyk in a May report, "and that it enables sustainable growth that benefits everyone."

Yet some people benefit more than others. Canny investors buy up residential properties in desirable locations and convert them into tourist apartments, provoking housing shortages and pushing up prices. Again, some

About 55,000 tourists visit Venice every day

MARCO ZORZANELLO FOR TIME

In the spring, Venice introduced temporary checkpoints to prevent day trippers from crowding especially busy areas

Barcelona now limits tour-group access to the Boquería market

cities have taken action. Copenhagen, for example, has limited the number of days per year that owners can rent out their residences. Barcelona has targeted Airbnb itself, forcing it to share data about owners and remove listings for unlicensed apartments. It has also launched a website where visitors can check if a potential apartment is legally registered. But speculators are hard to deter, especially as Airbnb doesn't require owners to reside in housing that is rented through the site.

Balancing the needs of locals with the demands of tourists is a challenge across Europe but perhaps nowhere more so than in Venice, where more than 20 million tourists crowd the piazzas and canals every year. When the city's mayor attempted to install checkpoints to potentially shut main thoroughfares to tourists, the initiative was greeted by protests from locals, who saw the surprise measure as an attempt to close the city. "We tried to do something for the city, for the residents," laments Paola Mar, Venice's deputy mayor for tourism. "This measure was for them, for their safety. But in Italy, you're only good if you do nothing."

Venice has not done nothing. The local government has restricted the construction of new hotels and takeout restaurants, and created a fast lane for residents on public transport. It has a plan in place to ease congestion by diverting foot and boat traffic on exceptionally crowded days this summer, and now employs 22 stewards in vests that read #ENJOYRESPECTVENEZIA to prevent tourists sitting on monuments, jumping in the canal, or otherwise misbehaving.

But imposing too many restrictions risks alienating the residents who depend on access to tourist dollars; across the E.U., 1 in 10 nonfinancial enterprises now serves the industry. In Venice, a proposal to ticket the entrance to San Marco Square has run into resistance from shopkeepers. And the subject of restricting cruise-ship access is a touchy one. "You have to know, 5,000 people work with the cruise ships," says Mar, who notes that the city council has asked the government to move large ships from the San Marco basin. "If we want people to stay in Venice, they have to have jobs."

And therein lies a hint of what is at stake. Venice has been losing residents for decades, dropping from nearly 175,000 in 1951 to around 55,000 now. The city seems close to uninhabitable in certain areas—its streets too crowded to stroll down, its hardware shops and dentist offices replaced by souvenir stalls. The same cycle threatens Barcelona and Florence; tourism drives locals out of the center, which then leaves even more spaces to be colonized by restaurants and shops that cater to tourists. Annelies van der Vegt understands the sentiment. A musician, she lives in the center of Amsterdam but is tired of finding entire tour groups on her doorstep, gaping at her 17th century house. "I'm thinking of moving to Norway," she says.

When the residents leave and the visitors take over, what is left behind can lose some of its charm. One day in May, Susana Alzate and Daniel Tobón from Colombia waited on Venice's Rialto Bridge as first a gaggle of Israeli Orthodox Jews, then a tide of Indian Sufis jostled by. Finally, the couple found a slot on the railing, struck a pose and shot their Instagram story. "It's beautiful," said Alzate as she gazed out on the Grand Canal. "But I would never come back. Too many tourists." ◻

PAOLO VERZONE—AGENCE VU FOR TIME

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TAKE ON
2 INTERVIEWS
3 INFORMATIONAL CALLS
AND A NETWORKING EVENT
TODAY
Starting a new career is no easy task, but AARP is here with the tools and resources to help get you as prepared as you can be.
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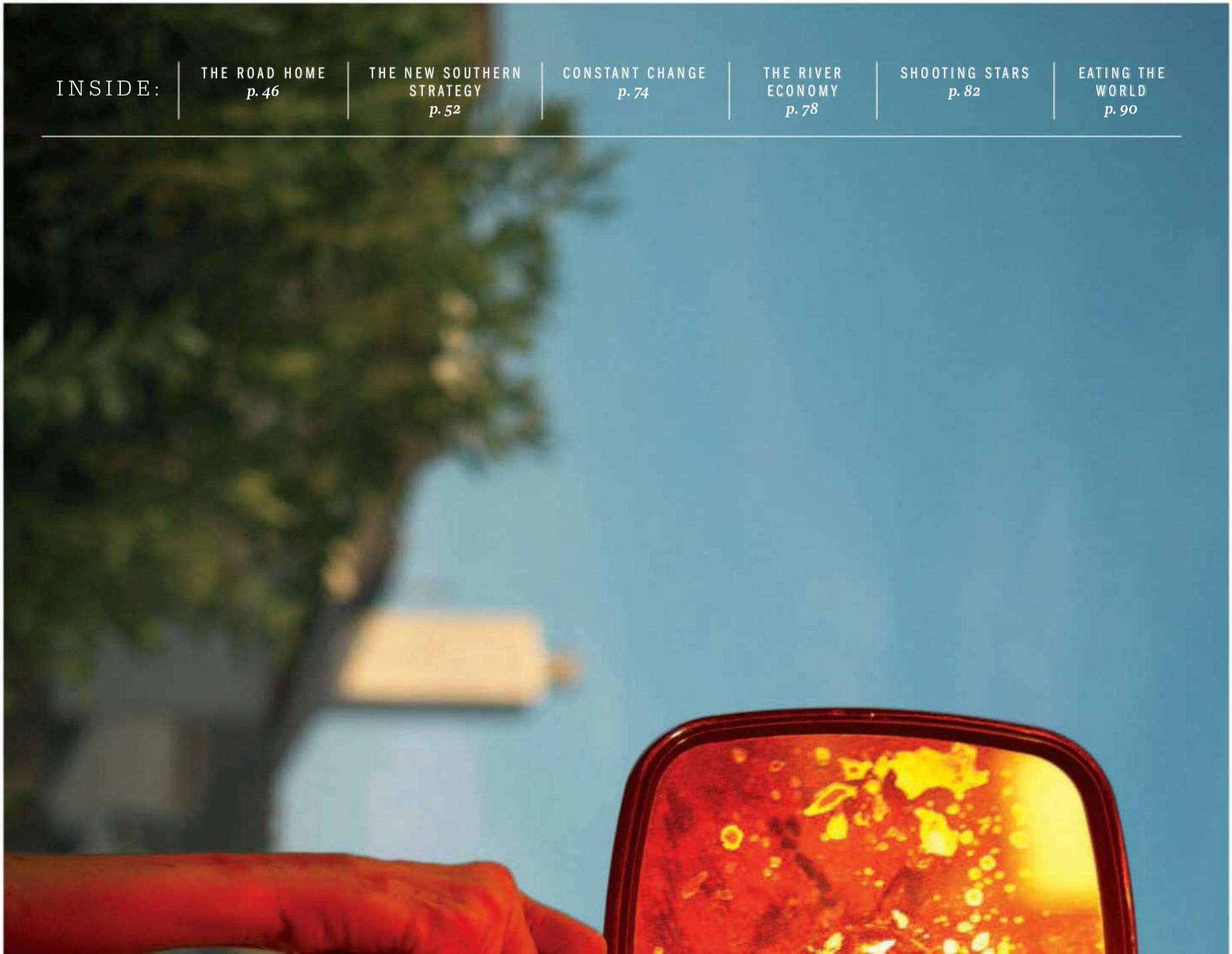

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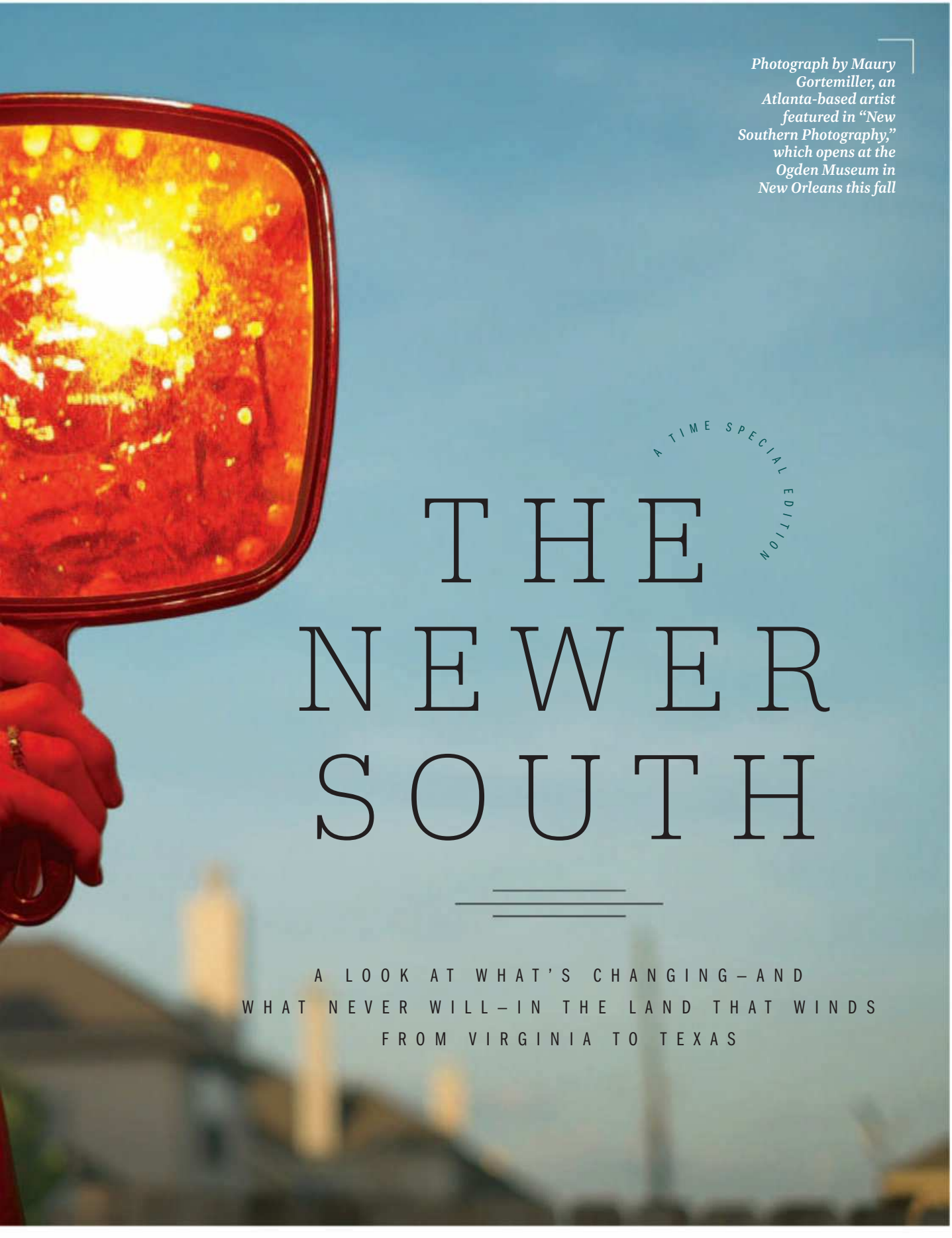


Photograph by Maury Gortemiller, an Atlanta-based artist featured in "New Southern Photography," which opens at the Ogden Museum in New Orleans this fall

A TIME SPECIAL EDITION

THE NEWER SOUTH

A LOOK AT WHAT'S CHANGING—AND WHAT NEVER WILL—IN THE LAND THAT WINDS FROM VIRGINIA TO TEXAS

Birds in Field, *Mound Bayou, Miss. All photographs from Thibodeaux's monograph* In That Land of Perfect Day

MY TRUE SOUTH

RETURNING HOME TO A PLACE I LOVE MORE THAN I LOATHE

By Jesmyn Ward

WHEN I MOVED HOME IN 2010, I PACKED MY TWO-door car nearly to the roof and drove for three days from California's Bay Area to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. I took my preferred route, avoiding long, blistered I-10 through Phoenix and the very bottom of New Mexico and Texas in favor of I-40 across northern Arizona and New Mexico and into Dallas. Except for the bright puncture of pinwheeling stars across the night sky, I despised the desert. The dry air, suffused with heat, felt as if it were flaying me. The plants, so sparse and scraggly, offered no shade, no succor. When I crossed the 100th meridian west of Dallas, with moisture settling in the air and plants crowding the sides of the highway, tall pines and verdant vines and lush shrubs, it was as if the very water in the air buoyed me up so I could float through the heat.

When I crossed the Louisiana-Texas state line, I exhaled. And I exhaled again when I crossed the Mississippi state line over the swampy expanse of Pearl River. When I turned right on Kiln DeLisle Road, driving past my grandmother's house, my grandaunt's house, my uncles' houses and my sister's house, where my uncles were fixing the roof on the pump shed and my aunt waved from her porch, another exhalation. When I pulled into my mother's

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRANDON THIBODEAUX

rocky driveway and cut my car off, another; and then a deep breath to steady myself and gain my bearings.

When people ask me why I returned home to Mississippi after years of living in the West, the East and the Midwest, I simply say this: I moved home because I love the beauty of the place, and I love the people. But this is a toothless answer, as weak and harmless as a baby's mouth.

It is difficult for them to understand why a successful black woman would choose to return to the South and, worse yet, to Mississippi, which looms large in the public's imagination for its racist depredations, and rightfully so. In the early 1800s, there were more millionaires in Mississippi than anywhere else in the country, and all these white men were made rich by cotton, by slavery. Their fields were notorious for their brutality and their productivity. When this cornerstone of the state's foundation was hobbled by the Civil War and the 13th Amendment, those in power reacted immediately, violently, burning with the same sense of entitlement that had led them to settle this wild place. Black pain, Native pain, women's pain: if this was necessary in order to reap their lot, to build their wealth, to earn their leisure, so be it.

Maw Maw's New Braids, *Duncan, Miss.*

White Mississippi's steadfast belief in this idea was not only readily apparent but also burned into the national consciousness. There are many images of tortured and lynched people taken during that era in the South: white crowds milling under mangled bodies, men, women and children alight, smiling. In the '60s, civil rights demonstrators across the South faced dogs, water hoses and guns. These images remain with us. Mississippi is the memory America invokes whenever it wants to convince itself that racial violence and subjugation are mostly lodged in the past, that they have no space in our present moment, save in this backwoods, backward place.

THIS CAN BE THAT PLACE. The aggression is sometimes slight and interpersonal, as simple as me walking through a department store with my children, an obvious shopper, when an older white woman with perfectly coiffed hair and small hands walks up to ask me if a shirt or a pair of shoes is on sale. When my youngest sister stops at a gas station, a white man takes offense at the volume of her rap music and tells her to "turn that shit down." When she visits her friend's apartment, the neighbor casually tosses the word *nigger* at her, as easily as an underhand softball toss.

Other times, it's when a black family in my neighborhood tries to buy a piece of property on the DeLisle Bayou and the white people who own property in the area do everything they can to block the purchase. Or when my mother's neighbor begins clearing his land to build his house, and the white people who live on the other side of the woods demand that he leave a strip of forest separating our black neighborhood from their white one.

Sometimes the aggression is deeper, systemic. It is black children in my family enrolling in free preschool programs where their teachers barely tolerate them, ignore them, do a terrible job of leading them to learning. It is my nephew being accused of selling drugs in middle school and being strip-searched. It is black children getting into fights at school, principals pressing charges, and those same children being suspended and sent to juvenile detention centers. It is a white drunk driver hitting my brother from behind, killing him and never being held accountable for the crime of murdering him—only for leaving the scene of an accident.

Living in the American South for generations, my family has collected so many accounts of racial terror, passed down over the decades. I carry every slur, every slight, every violent malign within me; they have become a part of me, accreted in me year after year to settle in me and express themselves in my body: vascular inflammation, migraine headaches, diabetes, giving birth to both of my children prematurely.

But if we suffer from a particularly Southern strain of this illness, know this is an American disease. I know it when I see Donald Trump bumper stickers on cars, paired as they are with Confederate flags and NRA logos. I know it when I see brown children being stolen from their parents, when I hear the openmouthed wail, the panicked screech, with no promise of reunion. I know it when Trump refuses to call white terrorists "terrorists," when he insists that even though they march with torches, beat black men viciously at their rallies and kill a woman by driving into a crowd, that these are still "fine" people. Ascribes them both virtue and personhood, while denying the same to anyone with melanin in their skin, anyone with ancestors from Senegal and Benin and Nigeria and Haiti and Cuba and Colombia and Mexico and Chad and Syria and Somalia and Iran.

There is an American assumption underlying every bit of this terror: I see you, I know you, and you are nothing. I remember this when the pressure of living as an adult with my family and children in the South seems like too much, when the poverty my family and community has been mired in for generations by design is too galling, too present. There are moments that would break me if they could, moments when I am all too aware of how we have been robbed of opportunities to create intergenerational

wealth, when our schools fail us, when we are shuttled into the service sector, when we scrabble for demeaning job after demeaning job. Days when I see one of my cousins, struggling with addiction and untreated mental illness, walking the streets shirtless and shoeless, drowning in his life, and my heart breaks. It is on days like this when a white person will interview me and ask me how to make black people want more for themselves, and I've had enough.

I want to run away, at moments like that, to someplace where there is no humidity, where the light is golden over the hills and the specter of all that we have survived and died by is not present in every flag, every street name, every monument, every vote. I fantasize about living in that fabled America. And then I remember that one cannot escape an infinite room. Moving across a few state lines is not going to help me escape this place that tells me I am less. The racist, misogynistic sentiment I encounter every day in Mississippi is the same belief that put in place the economic and social caste systems that allowed America to become America. It is the bedrock beneath the soil. Racial violence and subjugation happen on the streets of St. Louis, on the sidewalks of New York City and in the BART stations of Oakland.

I BREATHE. I remain. I remember that Mississippi is not only its ugliness, its treachery, its willful ignorance. It is also my nephew, hurling his body down a waterslide, rocketing to the bottom, joy running from shoulder to heel. It is my godmother boiling pots and pots of shrimp and pouring them into a children's pool so we can eat the delicious spicy mess at our family gathering on the Fourth of July. It is my youngest sister smiling and dancing to Al Green in my godmother's driveway while the night enfolds like a hand and the insects hiss with summer's sibilant kiss. It is riding to a convenience store with my childhood friends with the windows down and the night wind caressing me on my cheekbones, UGK booming from the speakers in answer to the blooming Mississippi night. It is sitting on the porch with my 78-year-old grandmother, my children sandwiched between us on the swing, making idle talk and watching hummingbirds zip through the air beyond her screen as she tells us stories. Flush with joy.

But there is more. Here is my local bookseller, a white middle-aged man, arranging a celebratory birthday dinner for my sister and hosting it even as he is convalescing from an illness, and doing it all with a quiet, gentle smile. Here is one of my best friends from high school, a white woman with two toddlers, who stops her car when she sees black people pulled over by the police, pulling out her phone and filming in an attempt to belay disaster, to hold authority accountable, fussy children be damned. And behold the Pass Christian Public Library leading an initiative to choose *The Fire This Time,* a book about black experience in America, for its citywide reading program in order to foster community dialogue about what it means to be bound together in this place. We are trying to understand that one person's fate predicates another's, that this illness of racial violence and oppression affects all of us—not just in Mississippi, but throughout the South, America and abroad.

I like to imagine that one day, I will build a home of cement, a home built to weather the elements, in a clearing in a piney Southern wood, riven with oak and dogwood. I'd like a small garden where I could grow yellow squash and bell peppers in the summer, collards and carrots in the winter, and perhaps keep a few chickens. I wish for one or two kind neighbors who will return my headstrong bulldog if she wanders off, neighbors who I can gift a gallon of water in the aftermath of a hurricane. I like to think that after I die, my children will look at that place and see a place of refuge, of rest. I hope they do not flee. I hope that at least one of them will want to remain here in this place that I love more than I loathe, and I hope the work that I have done to make Mississippi a place worth living is enough. I hope they feel more themselves in this place than any other in the world, and that if they do leave, they dream of that house, that clearing, those woods, when they sleep.

Christmas Tree, *Alligator, Miss.*

This is the answer with teeth. The reply that demands nuance, introspection and ruthless clarity, enough to see that this can be another place. Even as the South remains troubled by its past, there are people here who are fighting so it can find its way to a healthier future, never forgetting the lessons of its long, brutal history, ever present, ever instructive.

We stand at the edge of a gulf, looking out on a surging, endless expanse of time and violence, constant and immense, and like water, it wishes to swallow us. We resist. We dredge new beaches, build seawalls, fortify the shore and hold fast to each other, even as storm after storm pushes down on us. We learn how to bear the rain, the wind, the inexorable waves. We fear its power, respect its reach, but we learn how to navigate it, because we must. We draw sustenance from it. We dream of a day when we will not feel the need to throw our children into its maw to shock them into learning how to swim. We stand. And we build.

Ward is a two-time winner of the National Book Award for fiction, most recently for Sing, Unburied, Sing, *and a professor of English at Tulane University*

MY FAVORITE PLACE

We asked notable Southerners to tell us about a place they love. Here are some of their favorites.

MIRANDA LAMBERT

Float the Guadalupe River by day and listen to live music at Gruene Hall by night—it's the perfect Texas outing.

LAMBERT IS A GRAMMY-WINNING SINGER

DREW BREES

I love Audubon Park in New Orleans, watching my kids play, feeding the ducks, admiring the oak trees and watching the sun set on the water.

BREES IS A QUARTERBACK FOR THE NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

RHIANNON GIDDENS

At K&W Cafeteria you walk in and see a cross section of the beautiful folks who make up Greensboro, N.C., and get some great Southern cooking.

GIDDENS IS A GRAMMY-WINNING MUSICIAN

VERSE

NEW WORK FROM SOUTHERN POETS

DUTY

By Natasha Trethewey

When he tells the story now
he's at the center of it,

everyone else in the house
falling into the backdrop—

my mother, grandmother,
an uncle, all dead now—props

in our story: father and daughter
caught in memory's half-light.

I'm too young to recall it,
so his story becomes the story:

1969, Hurricane Camille
bearing down, the old house

shuddering as if it will collapse.
Rain pours into every room

and he has to keep moving,
keep me out of harm's way—

a father's first duty: to protect.
And so, in the story, he does:

I am small in his arms, perhaps
even sleeping. Water is rising

around us and there is no
higher place he can take me

than this, memory forged
in the storm's eye: a girl

clinging to her father. What
can I do but this? Let him

tell it again and again as if
it's always been only us,

and that, when it mattered,
he was the one who saved me.

Trethewey, a Mississippi native, is a two-time U.S. poet laureate and a Pulitzer Prize winner. Her new collection, Monument, *will be published in November*

Deer Season

By David Joy

In South Carolina, season opens the first week of October. A few diehards at camp come at the start and stay till the end, but most of us filter in and out whenever time allows. We drive down, go home, work jobs and sneak back on weekends. For three months, life is governed by deer hunting.

Our camp is in McCormick County. More specifically Plum Branch, a town that is little more than a crossroads. A rutted gravel road cuts between pines to a series of flat-tired, pull-behind campers tarped and covered with tin, a bathhouse, a picnic shelter and a fire pit.

Spread over a few acres, there's Burt and Carole, Zeno and Diana, Billy and Nancy, Florida Joe, Son in Law, Ted, Shady Grady, Jackie, Randall, Jason, Lewis and me. Sometimes Son in Law's son-in-law comes with his son. It's a tongue-twisting maze of names and connections that would be hard to keep straight even if you were there from the beginning.

Most of these men have been coming here since before I was born. They're in their 60s, a few mid-70s, one inching fast for 80. After 45 seasons wandering the same woods, they've come to know the land intimately. They throw around names—the Owl Boxes, the UFO Hole, the Refrigerator Stand—places where they've killed deer for decades. At 34, I'm the youngest one here.

Sometimes at night the train goes by, and as the whistle blows the coyotes get to crying and it's about as lonesome a sound as any of us have ever heard. For a few seconds the stories stop, and we turn our ears away from the campfire to listen. The wood crackles and pops, and Florida Joe pokes at the coals with his walking stick.

Sometimes Zeno Ponder passes around a gallon jug of muscadine cordial. The bottle always stops a little longer when it reaches Son in Law. He takes one sip, glances around, sneaks another. Someone gives him hell and everyone gets to laughing, and, though none of us air a breath of sentimentality, I know it's been a year since any of us felt this good.

I come from a family of small-game hunters, so it was the men and women at camp who taught me to hunt deer. Jackie Medford showed me how to read sign, scrapes, rubs and licking branches. Last November, Burt Hogsed gave me the tree where I would later kill my biggest deer to date. Zeno Ponder was the one who first handed me a knife and told me where to cut. Any gap that may exist in age is bridged by a deep belief that there is something greater than mere subsistence gained from time afield.

For the most part, ours is a culture on the brink of extinction. Fewer are finding their way into the sport, and every year there is less land to roam. More than just the hunting, though, what we hold on to is a microcosm of what the growing urban-rural divide has erased across much of the rural South. It's that old-time communion that used to be commonplace.

The meals we share are no different than what used to be Sunday suppers. The storytelling around the fire used to be front-porch affairs. The large, extended families that filled church pews, the kinds of families with tongue-twisting mazes of names and connections, don't hold together like they did in the past. Kids move away and seldom return. The fellowship halls where people gathered for reunions are empty. The family graves are grown over with weeds. But there are holdout pockets where story still matters and people are still tied to the land.

At camp we hold on to tradition, and as the moon rises behind the pines, the old men talk and I listen. Deep down I know it won't last, that it can't, so I linger on every word. If time favors us all the same, there will come a season when I am alone. Sooner or later, there will come a night when the last of the fire burns out.

Joy's latest novel, The Line That Held Us, *comes out Aug. 14*

"Ours is a culture on the brink of extinction."

LAMBERT: ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE T. WEBSTER FOR TIME; DEER SEASON: ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

If she wins, Abrams will become America's first black female governor

COMING FOR GEORGIA

CAN STACEY ABRAMS MAKE HISTORY?

By Molly Ball/Atlanta

PEOPLE TEND TO REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME THEY heard Stacey Abrams speak, and it's easy to see why. On a Friday afternoon in May, the Democratic nominee for governor of Georgia is at a union hall in Augusta, telling a story about her father, a college-educated black man who was relegated by his race to working at a shipyard in southern Mississippi in the 1970s. The family had one car, so Robert Abrams would sometimes hitchhike home in the middle of the night. When he didn't come home one time, the rest of the family set out to pick him up and found him half-frozen by the side of the road, having given his coat to a homeless man. They asked why he, a poor man on a lonely road at night, would do such a thing. And Robert said, "Because I knew you were coming for me."

You can hear scattered sniffles in the union hall as his daughter pauses. Then she roars: "I am coming for you, Georgia! Help me get there!"

This kind of moment is one reason why Abrams, 44, has a chance to become America's first black female governor. Describe someone as "commanding

PHOTOGRAPH BY AKASHA RABUT FOR TIME

MY FAVORITE PLACE

TIG NOTARO

Sitting on the beautiful wraparound porch of Cat Island Coffeehouse in Pass Christian, Miss., overlooking the ocean, you can enjoy the tastiest coffee anywhere. The eclectic, Southern-centric collection of books is an added bonus.

NOTARO IS AN ACTOR AND COMEDIAN

DEION SANDERS

Farmers Market in Fort Myers, Fla., has some of the best soul food I've ever had. It's a must every time I go back home.

SANDERS IS AN NFL NETWORK ANALYST

BILLY REID

The Shoals is a snapshot of all that is happening in the South, from artists who entertain the world with incredible music, cook amazing meals and design beautiful objects, to the serenity of a small cabin by the lake.

REID IS A FASHION DESIGNER

the room" and you generally conjure an image of *gravitas*—a man, likely white, in a suit, emitting soaring oratory. Abrams is a big-boned, natural-haired, youthful-looking woman with a quizzical smile and a gap between her front teeth. She's as likely to geek out about tax policy or *Star Trek* as she is to summon the spirit of justice. Yet when she speaks, all kinds of people—from black folks in rural communities to yuppie "resistance" moms around Atlanta to this crowd of rough-handed electrical workers—go quiet and listen. In a Democratic Party divided and desperate for fresh faces, Abrams is already becoming a national star.

"I know talent when I see it," says Valerie Jarrett, a former top adviser to Barack Obama, who tells me she sees the same kind of "unusual" skills in Abrams: "I see somebody who campaigns authentically, has character and integrity, is resilient and graceful, and who is able to take the long view and ignore a lot of noise."

Whether she can win is another matter. Georgia has grown purpler as its demographics shift, and November could bring a national Democratic wave driven by women and people of color. Abrams will benefit from a well-funded campaign and a divisive opponent, Georgia secretary of state Brian Kemp, who emerged battered from a primary runoff on July 24. But in a state that hasn't elected a Democratic governor in two decades, Abrams remains an underdog. "There's no question the state is becoming more diverse, but that doesn't mean a conservative state has all of a sudden become liberal," says Whit Ayres, a Washington-based Republican pollster who has worked extensively in Georgia. All of Abrams' charisma, money and momentum won't matter if the political math doesn't add up.

On the other hand, if she can pull it off, the implications would be profound, not just for Georgia but for the whole region and potentially the nation. Ever since Bill Clinton won re-election in 1996 with a strategy of triangulation, Democrats have tried to win in Republican territory by appealing to white centrist voters. The idea was to combine them with the Democrats' base, but it frequently left white voters cold and the base unenthused. Abrams' campaign is built on the proposition that a compelling candidate can get elected in the South with a progressive message that attracts liberal whites and minorities to the polls in greater numbers.

If she's right, Abrams could show the wilderness-wandering Democrats a new way, says Ilyse Hogue, head of the abortion-rights group NARAL. "We've seen women run like men a lot, and Stacey is not doing that," Hogue says. "The script of how you run for office has been determined for eons by white men telling everybody else what to do, and Stacey Abrams said, 'No, thank you.'" Her campaign isn't just a playbook; it's an act of imagination. And so, like any unprecedented effort, there's a good chance it could fail.

Abrams campaigns at a barbecue restaurant in Atlanta on July 2

"MY SISTER SAYS I live in the gap between gentrification and the ghetto," Abrams says cheerfully, welcoming me to her three-story townhouse on the east side of Atlanta on a recent Saturday night. She has just returned from a whirlwind trip to New York City and San Francisco, appearing on *Late Night With Seth Meyers,* fundraising and hawking her new book, *Minority Leader,* because what better does a businesswoman-novelist-lawyer-activist-politician have to do with her time, really, than write a memoir and go on tour?

Since Abrams is single and lives alone, a rare night at home is an opportunity to see her close-knit family. Two of her five siblings, 41-year-old Richard and 36-year-old Jeanine, have brought their kids over for a dinner of salad and spaghetti in her combined living-and-dining room, which is lined floor to ceiling with family photos, African art and books: Aristotle, Elmore Leonard, Neil Gaiman, Robert Caro. The siblings banter while the kids tear around. As Richard, a soft-spoken social worker, teases Jeanine, a microbiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about her cat Pepper's weight, Abrams

NOTARO: ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE T. WEBSTER FOR TIME; ABRAMS: AKASHA RABUT FOR TIME

stands behind her sister's back and gestures to indicate the cat's girth. "He glares at you," she grins. "Like, 'You will give me that food, or I will kill you.'"

Abrams was born into a family that her mother Carolyn termed "genteel poor," because they watched PBS and read books but had no money. Carolyn once dropped out of third grade because she couldn't pay the fee that segregated school buses charged. (A kindly neighbor gave her work, and she graduated as valedictorian.) Abrams, the second oldest, was born in Wisconsin while her mother was in graduate school, but spent most of her childhood in Gulfport, Miss., where Carolyn's advanced degree was good for a job as a librarian, earning less than the school janitor. "They went away for education, but when they got back to Mississippi, they were still black," Abrams says of her parents. The house was tiny, and sometimes the electricity or water got cut off, but her parents' code was strict: "Go to church, go to school, take care of each other." Having nothing, they said, was not an excuse for doing nothing.

When Abrams was in high school, her parents were called to the Methodist ministry, and the family moved to Atlanta so they could attend seminary. Abrams graduated from Spelman College and Yale Law School, then became a tax attorney and worked for the city of Atlanta. She also wrote romance novels under a pen name and started several businesses. One, a bottled-water company for babies, led to another, a payment company that serves small businesses. The idea came from the experience of the water company, which couldn't afford to wait for payment after filling orders. "People say, 'Oh, that's so obvious. Why didn't anybody think of it before?'" says Lara Hodgson, Abrams' business partner.

In 2006, Abrams ran for the state house of representatives, winning a Democratic primary for an open seat. In the legislature, she earned a reputation as being detail-oriented and not afraid to question her elders. "If she challenged you on a point, she was going to be right," says Carolyn Hugley, a 25-year house veteran who became one of her mentors. "As a woman, sometimes men don't appreciate that kind of thing." Abrams was known as a talented speaker and bill reader, but other Democrats sometimes bridled at her know-it-all tendencies, according to Bill Crane, an Atlanta-based political analyst.

Abrams used her legal experience to pore over the text of proposals. Early in her tenure, when a Republican legislator was struggling to explain the

'WE'VE SEEN WOMEN RUN LIKE MEN A LOT, AND STACEY IS NOT DOING THAT.'

—Ilyse Hogue, president of NARAL

RACES TO WATCH

The South remains Republican territory. Three elections in November will test the GOP's dominance:

FLORIDA'S 26TH HOUSE DISTRICT

Two-term Republican incumbent Carlos Curbelo is a moderate in a swing district that's mostly Hispanic. Democrats are attacking him for being too conservative on immigration.

TENNESSEE SENATE

Democrats have a rare pickup opportunity in the Volunteer State after recruiting popular former governor Phil Bredesen to run against Marsha Blackburn, a conservative Congresswoman.

VIRGINIA'S 10TH HOUSE DISTRICT

Two-term Republican Barbara Comstock is vulnerable in an affluent Northern Virginia district where more than 1 in 4 voters are Hispanic or Asian, and more than half have a college degree.

details of his own bill, she passed him a helpful note, and then another, and another. Finally he sat down next to her and let her explain it for him, she recalls. At the end of the hearing, she was the only one on the panel to vote against the bill, a minor regulatory measure. The Republican was shocked; why had she helped him? "I said, 'Look, I think your bill is a bad idea. I just don't think it should be bad law,'" Abrams says. "After that, Republicans would bring me their bills and ask me to look at them. They didn't always agree with me, but they knew they could trust me, and not every disagreement has to become a battle."

In 2010, Abrams was elected house minority leader, becoming the first woman to lead a caucus in either chamber of the legislature. Georgia, which had been mostly led by Democrats since Reconstruction, was undergoing a rapid shift to Republican dominance, and the 2010 Republican wave had put all statewide offices in GOP hands. Still, Abrams was able to gain leverage for the badly outnumbered Democrats through her command of the issues and by exploiting Republican divisions. The current GOP governor, Nathan Deal, is a business-friendly moderate who has vetoed religious-liberty and firearms bills. Abrams worked with him on criminal-justice reforms that have been hailed nationally for reducing prison costs without increasing crime. She worked with Republicans to secure the state's biggest-ever public-transportation funding package and to prevent a popular scholarship program from being cut. In the gubernatorial primary, her Democratic opponent, former state legislator Stacey Evans, accused Abrams of being too willing to cooperate with Republicans.

If elected, Abrams vows to be "the public education governor," boosting Georgia's education budget after years of painful cuts. She would expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act and enhance state services for people like her brother Walter, a heroin addict and ex-convict whose story she tells to illustrate her personal connection to criminal-justice and mental-health issues. Georgia's economy is booming, but Abrams points out that the wealth is not widely shared and promises to make the state's development more inclusive by encouraging small business.

Abrams holds liberal positions on social issues, but she considers herself a pragmatist. She likes to boast that she was once given a Friend of Labor award and an "A" rating from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce in the same year. Still, some of her proudest achievements aren't bills she passed but Republican efforts she stopped. In 2011, as one of the Democrats appointed to a commission to study the state's tax system, she argued that the Republican proposal to cut income taxes while raising a sales tax on cable service would increase the amount most people paid. When the committee ignored her, she asked the chair for an electronic copy of the fiscal model used to construct the bill. "He said yes, because he did not know what that was," she tells me with a grin. Abrams took home the data and reorganized it by income level to show that 82% of Georgia families would see their taxes go up. She organized her findings by legislative district, put it into a color-coded spreadsheet and left a copy on every desk in the house. The tax overhaul failed, and on the campaign trail Abrams can credibly boast of having single-handedly stopped the largest tax increase in Georgia history.

Back at Abrams' house, the discussion bounces between family stories, politics and history. Talk of livestock reminds Abrams of her opposition to legalizing backyard chicken coops statewide, on the grounds that local jurisdictions should decide. "Some of these libertarians, it's like they read the back of the manifesto but not the whole thing," she says drily. The siblings' parents, now nearing 70, moved back to Mississippi after seminary, where they were driven into further penury helping parishioners who had been overlooked by FEMA recovery from Hurricane Katrina. The Abrams' church, Richard says, was the only place in their segregated, two-stoplight town that served both blacks and whites.

Abrams recalls how their father stopped her eldest sister Andrea's graduation when the principal got her name wrong, and interrupted another awards ceremony when only half of her sister Leslie's honors were announced. (Andrea is now an anthropology professor, Leslie a federal judge.) In the background of Abrams' victory speech, he can be heard shouting, "That's my daughter!" When she filed her candidacy for governor, her parents surprised her by driving all night to appear at the Capitol. "My daddy's more stubborn than me," Abrams says with a sigh.

THE NEXT MORNING, Abrams skips church to sleep in and catch up on a favorite show, *Supernatural*. Its warrior angels and demons "create some very interesting theological questions," she muses, settling onto her cream-colored sofa to talk about the campaign. In her primary victory, Abrams got 76% of the Democratic vote and won 153 of 159 counties; 199,681 more Democrats voted than in the last midterm primary four years ago, a 57% increase. That November, Deal won the gubernatorial race by 202,000 votes.

Abrams says her biggest obstacle is getting people to believe victory is possible. "Georgia is different now, but it's hard for people to believe that change happens," she says. "You don't notice change when it's gradual. My campaign seeks to harness it, but I'm asking people to not believe their eyes."

Despite its red-state reputation, Georgia is more diverse than Virginia and bluer than Alabama, two Southern states that recently elected Democrats who ran on expanding health care. The economic focus of Virginia Governor Ralph Northam and Alabama Senator Doug Jones contrasted with culture-warrior opponents whose messages echoed President

Abrams will face Brian Kemp, who won a GOP runoff on July 24, in November's general election

CURTIS COMPTON—ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/TNS/SIPA

Trump's. Jones' win also highlighted the power of black women voters, particularly in the South. Kemp, Abrams' opponent, aired primary ads that showed him threatening a teenager with a loaded rifle and vowing to personally round up illegal immigrants.

Although Abrams' central priorities are budget-focused, she's to the left of most Georgia voters on polarizing issues like gun rights, Confederate monuments and kneeling NFL players. But she has an underrated ability to connect with rural and working-class whites along class lines. Her campaign signs are popping up in affluent white suburban neighborhoods, and some early polling has shown her ahead of Kemp. Crane, the analyst, says Georgians generally want a commonsense conservative, not a "politically incorrect conservative," as Kemp styles himself.

Abrams argues that if Obama could lose Georgia by just 5 points without campaigning there, she can make up the difference with a rigorous campaign, including a well-staffed field program. Her campaign raised $2.75 million in the last quarter from over 30,000 donors; the state's software rejected the file containing her campaign-finance report for being too large. "We're building a new coalition that hasn't been built for a Democrat in Georgia in the current era," says her campaign manager, Lauren Groh-Wargo. "That's what it's going to take. Communities of color plus progressive-leaning whites are a majority of the population." The problem for Democrats is that they don't necessarily vote, and even many Abrams allies doubt she can get enough of them to do so. "She has to do record minority turnout and then carry 25% to 30% of the white vote," Crane says.

Abrams has never faced a real Republican opponent before. But she does have experience beating the GOP with her new coalition. In 2011, Republicans used the redistricting process to tilt the electoral map in their favor, drawing themselves enough seats in the state house to win a two-thirds majority based on expected voting patterns. A supermajority would allow the GOP to pass constitutional amendments, so in the 2012 election, Abrams made it her mission to stop them from getting it. To do that, Democrats had to win four Republican seats.

Abrams recruited candidates like Kimberly Alexander, a black former IBM executive in exurban, overwhelmingly white Paulding County. She trained them, staffed them and wrote their talking points and campaign mailers. She traveled the country with a 20-page slide deck to convince national Democratic funders to pitch in. She instructed the candidates, who signed a contract that committed them to a grueling canvassing schedule, to focus on education, the economy and good government. "Republicans had the majority of the voters, but they had drawn into each of those districts a sizable minority population that they presumed would not vote," Abrams says. "And they presumed there was no universe where that minority population would form a coalition with white Democrats to win."

Today Alexander is a state representative, as are just enough of Abrams' other recruits that Republicans never reached the two-thirds mark. It's successes like these that make Abrams believe she can do what few thought possible. And now she is coming for Georgia. ◻

ABRAMS IS BUILDING A NEW COALITION OF PEOPLE OF COLOR AND PROGRESSIVE WHITES

Drawlin' for Votes

WHAT DEMOCRATS DON'T GET ABOUT THE SOUTH

By David French

THERE IS NO ACCENT QUITE LIKE THE SOUTHERN accent, and there is no Southern accent quite like the Southern politician's. Spend any time in the South—especially in the rapidly growing suburban and exurban South—and you'll hear the drawl. The men sound just a tiny bit folksier, as if your doctor would be just as comfortable plowing a field as he would be reading an X-ray. The women just sound nice, so that the same words you hear in daily life across the U.S. somehow come off kinder and gentler.

But there is nothing—absolutely nothing—subtle about the Southern politician's accent. No sir. To hear the Southern politician talk is to hear the backwoods come to the big city. Their past profession doesn't matter. Neither does their upbringing. There's something about runnin' for office in the South that exaggerates that drawl and drops all those *g*'s.

At its heart, Southern politics is cultural politics. That's because Southern politics isn't just about the South as it is—representing its concrete economic and religious interests, for example—it's also about the South as it sees itself. The idea of the South is very important to the people of the South, and it has been for a very long time.

In 2018, the South sees itself as economically advanced but culturally traditional. It's proud of its industry and technology, but it's also proud of its faith and its families. The majority of the people don't hunt or fish or farm, but they feel connected to people who do. A Tennessee lawyer may never leave a paved road, but he'll drive a truck that can haul hay. Even people who don't own guns value the South's gun culture. They may not have a firearm, but they will not tolerate a government that restricts their ability to defend themselves.

That's the idea of the South in 2018. Southerners love God. They respect the traditions of faith and family—including manners and respect for elders. Southerners are connected to the land. They despise elitism. They're suspicious of government but not averse to its help. And they are definitely proud of their region and its way of life—even if its day-to-day reality is no longer so distinct.

Ideologically, it's a mess. Culturally, it's coherent.

Make no mistake, the idea of the South has changed—mainly for the better—over time. For generations, the idea of the South revolved around race. While there were other important aspects of Southern culture, maintaining racial separation and subjugation was at the top of the list. That was the South of the Confederacy. That was the South of Jim Crow.

There are those who would argue that there has been minimal progress. Critics point to continuing racial divides in voting habits, widespread de facto segregation (which is often worse in the great cities of the North) and allegedly race-motivated voter-ID laws to claim that not much has changed. But that's wrong. Transplant a "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever" voter from 1963 to 2018 and he'd be flabbergasted to learn that South Carolina elected a black Senator through predominantly white votes. He'd be stunned at the level of social sanction leveled against white Southerners who express racist ideas. He'd know that the South is substantially different.

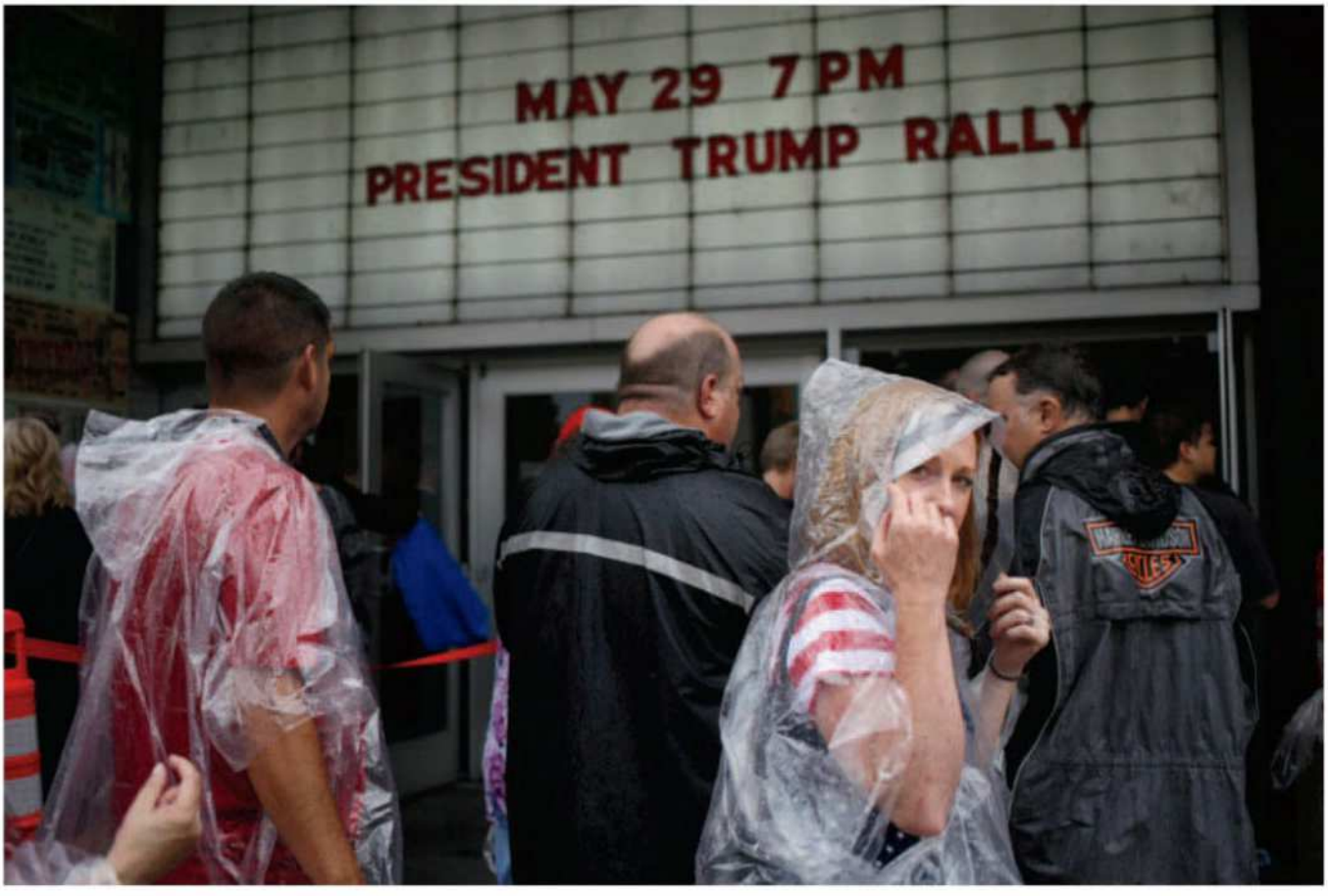
THE SMART SOUTHERN POLITICIAN 'CULTURE SIGNALS,' SOMETIMES TO ABSURD EXCESS

BUT IT'S NOT entirely different. Race still obviously matters, a lot. And as the Southern GOP primary landslide for Donald Trump shows, the white Southern voter is at best too tolerant of racism and race-baiting.

Moreover, the populist heart still beats in the Southern working class. The region has never been as economically conservative as the Tea Party and other elements of the Southern GOP liked to think. There is no groundswell for entitlement reform. The so-called disability belt—the counties where residents disproportionately draw disability benefits—runs straight through the heart of the South.

The South's decisive swing from blue to red is one of the most analyzed and debated political changes in American history. There are those who say it's all about race—that as the Democratic Party abandoned its racist roots, Southern whites responded to GOP dog whistles. The South may be less racist, they argue, but race is still the dominant political and cultural factor of Southern political life.

But that's too simplistic. And it understates the role of what for many is the single most important aspect of their identity: their faith in God. The South is America's most churchgoing region. How is it



The line outside a Trump rally in Nashville in the spring. Trump's 2016 victory continued the GOP's dominance of Southern politics

LUKE SHARRETT—BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES

possibly going to connect with a Democratic Party dominated by a secular, progressive elite? Only 32% of white Democrats believe in the God of the Bible. The result is a massive cultural gap between most of the South and one of our two great political parties, and it translates into electoral routs. Republicans now have unified control (governor's mansion, statehouse and state senate) of eight of the 11 states that made up the Confederacy. The GOP controls 18 of 22 Senate seats and holds an overwhelming advantage in the House. Trump won 10 of the 11 states in 2016, as did Mitt Romney in 2012.

And so the smart Southern politician "culture signals," sometimes to comically absurd excess. The GOP nominee for Georgia governor, Brian Kemp, made national news when he ran a primary-campaign ad that featured him "blowing up" government spending with an actual explosion, brandishing his pump-action shotgun to show his love for the Second Amendment, firing up a chain saw to "rip up" government regulations and starting his "big truck" just in case he needs to "round up criminal illegals and take 'em home myself."

In another ad, he holds a shotgun as he makes a kid portraying his daughter's boyfriend recite elements of his platform. And what were the two things that were most important if the kid wanted to date one of Kemp's daughters? "Respect, and a healthy appreciation for the Second Amendment, sir."

Kemp's opponent, Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle, was caught on tape complaining that the primary had devolved into a contest over "who had the biggest gun, who had the biggest truck and who could be the craziest."

Cagle was wrong. And not surprisingly, he lost to Kemp in a July 24 runoff. The contest isn't over who can be the craziest. It's over who can be the most Southern, the most proudly traditional and the least politically correct. There's a method to this madness. The truly Southern man won't be impressed by establishment politics. He's going to be skeptical of elites. And he'll never be ashamed of his faith. This culture signaling declares to the voter that he's not just representing them; he's representing a way of life.

How do you prove your bona fides? There's nothing subtle about it. You hold your gun. You drive your truck. You show that you do all the things that your constituents might like but rarely do. They may not hunt, but you will. They may not haul hay, but you will. They may not own guns, but you'll own 10. To defend the Southern culture, your job is clear. You have to be more Southern than the South.

French, a lifelong Southerner, is a senior writer for National Review *and a former major in the U.S. Army Reserve*

MY FAVORITE PLACE

TIM MCGRAW

I love the food in my home state. Any little local place, like Ray's PeGe in Monroe, that serves home-cooked Louisiana food works for me.

MCGRAW IS A GRAMMY-WINNING COUNTRY SINGER

ELI MANNING

Few things beat a lunch of BBQ pork chops with butter beans, green beans and jalapeño cornbread at the Ajax Diner in Oxford, Miss.

MANNING IS A QUARTERBACK FOR THE NEW YORK GIANTS

JASON ISBELL

Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, which has finally been returned to its former glory, is where I first played my songs for the Drive-By Truckers. More important, it's where "I'll Take You There," "Wild Horses" and "Kodachrome" were recorded. Irreplaceable.

ISBELL'S LATEST ALBUM IS *THE NASHVILLE SOUND*

VERSE

FOREDAY IN THE MORNING

By Jericho Brown

My mother grew morning glories that spilled onto the walkway toward her porch
Because she was a woman with land who showed as much by giving it color.
She told me I could have whatever I worked for. That means she was an American.
But she'd say it was because she believed
In God. I am ashamed of America
And confounded by God. I thank God for my citizenship in spite
Of the timer set on my life to write
These words: I love my mother. I love black women
Who plant flowers as sheepish as their sons. By the time the blooms
Unfurl themselves for a few hours of light, the women who tend them
Are already at work. Blue. I'll never know who started the lie that we are lazy,
But I'd love to wake that bastard up
At foreday in the morning, toss him in a truck, and drive him under God
Past every bus stop in America to see all those black folk
Waiting to go work for whatever they want. A house? A boy
To keep the lawn cut? Some color in the yard? My God, we leave things green.

Brown, a Louisiana native, is the author of The New Testament *and* Please

Race Day

By Stephanie Powell Watts

On race days we were slammed at Holly Farms Fried Chicken, the fast-food restaurant in North Wilkesboro, N.C., where I started working on my 16th birthday. Usually business was painfully slow, and I spent long, hot evenings after school in my brown and red polyester uniform, the days lapping into each other, few distinguishable from the next. I cleaned the store ("You got time to lean, you got time to clean," the manager would say), talked to friends in the dining room and on the phone, watched cars through the floor-to-ceiling windows like a goldfish in a bowl. Hours of standing around, languishing in the dining room waiting for something to happen, something momentous and exciting that would wake up the seemingly endless turning of the day. At the time, I was the only black person employed at my store. I didn't think about that fact in the late '80s. Then it was normal for there to be only one black face in any employment crowd. Even in fast food. Even in the South, which many African Americans call home.

Race days, the busiest days of the year, were different. Customers lined up at 6 a.m., when the doors opened, one after another on a conveyor belt, and we handed them buckets of chicken and our beloved crispy taters. Those Saturday mornings we worked without a break. Who had time for breaks? There would be time enough to breathe, to think, to sit down when every patron was in his or her car, travel trailer or truck and was headed to the North Wilkesboro Speedway. Racing started in Wilkes County in the late '40s and ended in 1996, with a brief revival about a decade later. Even if you don't know about racing (and I don't), you will have heard of NASCAR, the sport created by moonshiners to prove who was the fastest. Every other day of the year, Kentucky Fried Chicken seemed like the most popular fast-food chicken in town, but Holly Farms was the official race sponsor. Besides, we opened early, and KFC didn't. You had to have chicken for race day—not sandwiches, not burgers, but fried chicken, food that feels casual but like a celebration at the same time.

Thousands came from all over the town and the county to the speedway to watch the cars zoom by and to eat and drink and drink. I have this on good authority, but I never went to a race. I don't know any black people who went. No one I ever knew talked about being in the stands and certainly not about driving. On race day, not a single customer that carried out those hundreds of buckets of chicken and taters was obviously a person of color. And if you are black, you remember black people. North Wilkesboro is not and was not Andy Griffith's Mayberry; you don't know every passerby. But seeing another brown face signals to you that you are welcome, or at the very least you are not in imminent danger.

The speedway is gone now. Not demolished but rusting and not in use. It would take a fortune to revive. Not many people in towns where most worked on factory lines in chicken processing or furniture building have a fortune. Holly Farms was bought out by Tyson, the restaurant business closed, and the buildings no longer exist. I am no longer young. But the memory of all that lingers. In every life you leave your loved ones behind, through death, by omission and sometimes because the chasm between them and you is too great. You leave your town by choice or by the inevitable unspooling of life. But at some point you realize that you loved some parts of it. Even when it is flawed. You can even love a failing chicken restaurant and a speedway you never went to. You were young. When those days come to mind, you will want to call your people, even the ones who are no longer there or anywhere. You will want to declare: I have loved you through time and space. It is hard to be us. It is hard to be anyone. You will want to tell them, I forgive, I forgive you everything.

Powell Watts is the author of No One Is Coming to Save Us

"You can even love a failing chicken restaurant."

MCGRAW: ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE T. WEBSTER FOR TIME; FOOD: ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

A TIME SPECIAL EDITION

CHANGE AGENTS

FROM EDUCATION CRUSADERS TO CULINARY INNOVATORS TO EVANGELICAL ACTIVISTS, MEET 31 PEOPLE WHO ARE RESHAPING THE SOUTH

Bryan Stevenson at the Equal Justice Initiative headquarters in Montgomery, Ala., in a room where soil from lynching sites is exhibited

PHOTOGRAPH BY NICK FRONTIERO

ALABAMA

Bryan Stevenson

CONFRONTING THE TRUTH

WHAT TEXTBOOKS BLANDLY label the Great Migration—the movement of millions of African Americans in the 20th century from the rural South to Northern cities—is recalled more viscerally by the people who lived it. When as a boy he visited his grandmother in Philadelphia, Bryan Stevenson heard firsthand of the brutality that drove black families north: forced servitude, the matrix of laws and threats known as Jim Crow, and lynching.

So when Stevenson picked up his law degree from Harvard and moved toward Alabama, what he obeyed was no normal impulse. Marines are trained to run in the direction of gunfire, first responders into flames. Stevenson has spent his life advancing on truths the nation ties itself in knots to avoid.

'I'M STILL PERSUADED THERE'S SOMETHING BETTER WAITING FOR US IN THIS COUNTRY.'

—Bryan Stevenson

"If you're in a country where we have just refused to acknowledge the history of slavery, I think that creates a certain kind of comfort with that history—a certain indifference to the victimization and the anguish and the trauma that that history created, which we can only address by talking more directly about that history," Stevenson tells TIME. "I am a proponent of truth and reconciliation. I just think those things are sequential."

He came to the South to advocate for prisoners facing execution, almost all of whom were black. One had been railroaded in the town where *To Kill a Mockingbird* was set. Legal executions of African Americans had surged, but not out of the blue; they climbed just when lynchings were deemed unseemly. What had taken place on the courthouse lawn moved indoors, black robes replacing white.

Seeing the connection, Stevenson began a new project: the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, the first memorial devoted to victims of lynching. It opened in April in Montgomery. Inside, the names of 4,400 lynching victims are inscribed on 6-ft. steel slabs hanging from the ceiling. Outside, an equal number of slabs were laid, waiting to be claimed by the counties where killings occurred. Those not collected will remain in the courtyard in silent reproach. That's the idea: we have to own it.

In the heart of the South, Stevenson detects progress. He notes that the lynching memorial met far less local resistance than his earlier project in a city cluttered with monuments to the Confederacy, to place plaques at former slave markets. All whites approach this subject with apprehension, while some fear of bearing blame. Stevenson, who titled his best-selling memoir *Just Mercy,* says, "I have no interest in punishing people for this history. I want to liberate us. I think people fear because they don't understand what's on the other side."

His voice is quiet, like his charisma. "We are not just slave states in the American South. We are not just lynching states. We are not just segregation states. We are more than that. The people are more than that. The region is more than that. But we can't ignore this part of our history that we have been so reluctant to address if we want to be seen as we truly are." —KARL VICK

TEXAS

Beth Moore

EVANGELIZING FOR WOMEN

IN LATE 2016, when one of America's best-known Southern Baptists reacted to then candidate Donald Trump's *Access Hollywood* tape by telling her nearly 1 million Twitter followers that she was tired of Christian leaders disrespecting and dismissing women, her words lit the evangelical world on fire. The blowback was strong (and white evangelicals ended up voting overwhelmingly for Trump), but that didn't stop Beth Moore. Nearly two years later, the best-selling author remains on the front lines of an effort to address sexism and abuse in the Southern Baptist Convention—and she's starting to succeed.

Southern Baptists don't let women lead congregations, but Moore has built her career on writing, speaking and ministry aimed at women. This spring, she condemned an influential seminary president who condoned abusive relationships, and thousands successfully called for his firing. She also wrote a viral open letter detailing the sexism she has faced in conservative evangelical circles. At the annual Southern Baptist gathering in June, discussion about women in the church was front of mind. The denomination adopted one resolution condemning abuse and another saying women should serve the church in "biblically appropriate" ways. While some wanted the group to take a stronger stand, it's clear that the discussion is far from over—thanks in part to women like Moore. —ABIGAIL ABRAMS

MISSISSIPPI

Demario Davis

TACKLING INEQUALITY

AS A KID IN MISSISSIPPI, New Orleans Saints linebacker Demario Davis didn't pick the typical childhood role models like athletes and superheroes. Instead, Davis idolized Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. "I just always gravitated toward people who sacrificed for the benefit of others," he tells TIME.

In 2014, Davis founded the Devoted Dreamers

TRAVIS DOVE—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

Academy, a summer program for low-income kids in Jackson that teaches skills ranging from financial literacy to antibullying techniques. Davis hopes to open five more branches in Mississippi—which languishes at the bottom of national health, economic and education rankings—but his work stretches beyond the state. Davis and Josh Norman of the Washington Redskins recently spent $10,000 at a San Antonio Walmart on supplies for immigrant families. In May, he and fellow Saints player Benjamin Watson wrote a letter supporting legislation to restore voting rights for some previously incarcerated Louisianans. The bill became law a few weeks later. When Davis met with NFL bigwigs to discuss the league's stance on protests, Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur Blank told him he missed his calling as a public speaker. Davis doesn't see politics in his future, but expect him to remain vocal. "I'm never going to be the one who stays quiet," says Davis. —SEAN GREGORY

NORTH CAROLINA

Ashley Christensen

COOKING UP COMMUNITY

EARLIER THIS YEAR, in the kind of social-media blowup that has become as inevitable as tuna tartare on a fancy restaurant menu, a picture of Michelle Obama on chef Ashley Christensen's Instagram feed prompted a follower to suggest that, more or less, she should shut up and cook. The Raleigh-based Christensen's heartfelt reply argued that hospitality goes beyond "a simple transaction of food for cash." Food personalities, she wrote, "have more reach and influence than ever before, and with that comes responsibility."

Christensen has taken on plenty. Her restaurants, anchored by the award-winning Poole's Diner, have made her a star in the food world. Her cooking elevates traditional comfort food without stripping it of its soul. But she has always balanced hospitality with social action, whether working with Share Our Strength to feed underprivileged children, weighing in on industry issues like workplace conditions for women in restaurants or changing men's and women's restrooms in her restaurants to "people rooms" in response to North Carolina's since-repealed "bathroom bill." That also got her some grief, along with plenty of support. Of course a chef can do more than cook. She can also post a sign on the windows of all her restaurants that lets people know exactly why she does more than just feed them. It reads, DON'T FORGET KINDNESS. —RAY ISLE

Chef Ashley Christensen, above, opened Poole's Diner in Raleigh, N.C., in 2007

VIRGINIA

Danica Roem

BREAKING POLITICAL BARRIERS

EVEN AS MANY PARTS of the country have embraced LGBT rights, the vast majority of Southern states lack nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people. Stigma is harder to measure, but it remains strong across the region too, which makes Danica Roem's election even more noteworthy. In 2018, she became the first openly transgender person to ever serve in a state legislature—not in Vermont or California, but in the Virginia district where the first major battle of the Civil War took place. "The South is not a monolith," says Roem, a Democrat who beat a conservative incumbent who once described himself as the state's "chief homophobe."

Since her election, Roem—who worked in local news before getting into politics—has had some extraordinary experiences, such as walking the red carpet at a Los Angeles awards ceremony to raise awareness about bullying. But most of her time has been spent doing the nitty-gritty work of a small-town politician. Her pet issue: fixing the traffic on Route 28. "I hope other well-qualified people who are trans step up and run for office," she tells TIME, "and get elected because of who they are, not despite it." —KATY STEINMETZ

SOUTH CAROLINA

Knox White

REVIVING DOWNTOWN

WHEN HE WAS GROWING UP in Greenville, S.C., everybody Knox White knew was connected to the textile mills that lined the Reedy River. Its currents powered the first looms, and its waters received their poisons—the price of a prosperity that waned as production began moving overseas in 1970s.

Greenville was the exception, saved by a far-sighted decision to diversify its industrial base. It landed GE, then Michelin and BMW, which has a plant less than 20 miles up I-85. When White was elected mayor in 1995, the city had the money and planning acumen to build an urban center where people actually live, complete with retail, restaurants and trails beside a reclaimed Reedy. "We've created a downtown with a very distinctive European feel to it," says White. His next big project is a 60-acre park, with affordable housing to hedge against gentrification. Dubbed "Unity," it's set for an area that was once home to two separate, segregated parks. White says the project is intended "to make amends for the sordid past." —K.V.

TENNESSEE

Kane Brown

EXPANDING COUNTRY MUSIC

'THERE HAVE BEEN SOME FANS THAT STILL DON'T LET ME IN.'

—Kane Brown

KANE BROWN KNOWS he doesn't look like "your average country artist," as he puts it: he's a biracial singer in a genre dominated by white stars, and you won't find him rocking a cowboy hat. But Brown has bucked norms at every step of his journey, from singing a Chris Young song at a high school talent show in Soddy-Daisy, Tenn., to touring with country heavyweights including Young himself. His 2017 single "What Ifs" is one of the most-streamed country songs ever, and he's the first artist to top all of *Billboard*'s country charts simultaneously.

Brown once looked forward to a "big-boy job" as a FedEx driver, but that was before his videos developed a following on Facebook. "You can't not chase dreams if they're in front of you," he tells TIME. Brown's honeyed drawl, willingness to stretch genre boundaries and highly personal storytelling have won him fans far beyond social media. "There have been some fans that still don't let me in," he says. But Brown, who believes country music is "all about love," has his eyes on bigger things. Once, he felt like an outcast. Now, he feels he belongs. The numbers—and the fans—already prove it. —RAISA BRUNER

FLORIDA

Caroline Lewis

SOUNDING A CLIMATE ALARM

PEOPLE ACROSS SOUTH FLORIDA are awakening to the danger of climate change, and Caroline Lewis is a big reason why. The former high school principal has spent the last eight years educating the region's vulnerable communities about its effects from the helm of the CLEO Institute, a nonprofit she founded. At the heart of CLEO's work is Lewis' training of local leaders in the science and policy of global warming, so they can spread the word in their communities. CLEO also helped found the Miami Climate Alliance, which has planned marches and helped shape local environmental policy. Some areas in South Florida have already seen a spike in flooding thanks to climate change, and the problem is only expected to worsen as sea levels rise—so the need for Lewis' work will only increase too. —JUSTIN WORLAND

GEORGIA

Paula Wallace

EDUCATING ARTISTS

PAULA WALLACE WAS a young elementary school teacher in Atlanta in 1977 when she left her job to embark on what she calls a "revolution in higher education," opening an art college that would prepare students for creative careers. Forty years later, the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) is a respected hub of art innovation, with nearly 14,000 students across its campuses around the world. Aiming to offer courses that were unavailable in the region, Wallace picked Savannah because of its history and grand old architecture, which SCAD has helped restore and preserve. Wallace's salary as one of the country's highest-paid college leaders has caused some controversy, but her influence on Savannah and the world of Southern art is unquestioned. —KATIE REILLY

VIRGINIA

Christy Coleman

CHALLENGING HISTORY

IN THE SOUTH, few subjects are as thorny as the history and meaning of the Civil War. But as CEO of the American Civil War Museum, based in Richmond, Christy Coleman has proved unafraid to wade into the middle of the conversation. As an African-American woman, her very presence in the field is noteworthy, and Coleman has found herself at the museum's helm during a moment of national

The Holy Game

By Paul Finebaum

It has been said that college football is a religion, and Saturday is its High Holy Day. So I was not surprised when I found myself at synagogue in Knoxville in September on Kol Nidre, the Friday evening start of Yom Kippur—the most solemn day of the Jewish year—and the rabbi asked who I favored in the next day's Georgia-Tennessee game.

Of course he did. If college football is America's lay religion, the South is its ecumenically evangelical center. Nowhere is the passion more intense than on the campuses of the 14 colleges of the Southeastern Conference and among their fans.

The fervor traces back to 1926, when the University of Alabama beat Washington in the Rose Bowl and gave Southerners something to celebrate on the national stage for the first time in about 70 years. Football buoyed us again through the civil rights era. When Alabama Governor George Wallace shamefully stood in the schoolhouse door in Tuscaloosa, the legendary coach Bear Bryant was roaming the sideline around the corner. The state may have been the laughingstock of the nation in most every category—but it was elite in football.

It still is under Nick Saban, who has made as much as $11 million a year leading the Alabama football team to five of the last nine national championships. That's an extraordinary sum for a public employee, yet the president at the time of Saban's hiring called him "the best financial investment this university has ever made."

The eye-popping salaries for Saban and his fellow SEC coaches are a result of the league's remarkable growth. In the 1970s, each SEC school received an annual payout of approximately $200,000 from the league. The number rose as more games were televised in the '80s and '90s. By 2007, the number had ballooned to $10.2 million. Last year, thanks

to the College Football Playoff and the creation of the SEC Network, each school reportedly took in an average of $41 million.

For diehard SEC fans, nothing means more than game day. Dick Coffee attended 781 straight Alabama games before his death at age 91. He watched his final, when 'Bama beat Notre Dame in 2013 for the national title in Miami, from a wheelchair. Freeman Reese made it to 701 consecutive Alabama games before the flu ended the streak. But his run did include a game against Tennessee that caused him and his wife Betty to miss their daughter's wedding. "We warned her," Reese said, noting that they made it in time for the reception.

Occasionally the fanaticism is downright criminal. In 2011, an Alabama fan named Harvey Updyke called our radio show to brag that he had poisoned the iconic trees at Toomer's Corner on the Auburn campus. On live radio, I asked him, "Did they die?" He replied, "They're not dead yet, but they definitely will die." I asked, "Is that against the law to poison a tree?" He replied, "You think I care? Roll damn Tide."

Updyke was arrested after his radio confession and eventually served a short jail sentence, but he became a mini celebrity as a result. Neighbors probably should have seen it coming, though. His two oldest children answered to Bear Bryant and Crimson Tyde, and he wanted to call his youngest Ally Bama, but his wife threatened to walk. She did, however, allow the dog to be named after Alabama coach Saban.

Perhaps the best way to understand the SEC is to think of it as football's megachurch. It matters little if you are in the first pew or the last, you're still part of the congregation. It doesn't matter which school you root for, or even if you went to one. It doesn't matter if you were a fan from birth who grew up playing football and attending college games with the family, or are a recent convert after marrying into the fold.

Indeed, even as the South changes, football and religion are never too far apart. The Archbishop Joseph Marino, now the Papal Nuncio to Malaysia, grew up in Birmingham in an Auburn family. In the 1990s, he was working in the Vatican for Pope John Paul II and was asked to entertain then Alabama coach Gene Stallings. The Alabama-Auburn rivalry was mentioned during the tour, and Stallings pressed the diplomat to declare his allegiance. "I told Coach Stallings that I had applied to go to Auburn, like my father and two brothers," Marino said, "but then changed my mind to enter the seminary." Coach Stallings paused for a moment, and then deadpanned: "That's when the good Lord really saved you!"

Finebaum is the host of his namesake show on ESPN Radio and the co-author of My Conference Can Beat Your Conference: Why the SEC Still Rules College Football

"He wanted to call his youngest Ally Bama, but his wife threatened to walk."

BROWN: RMV/SHUTTERSTOCK; ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

reckoning on its subject—and a period of evolution for the institution, which will open a new building next spring. Changes can be challenging, but Coleman is guided by a philosophy that's hard to dispute: "The most important thing was making the narrative complete," Coleman tells TIME. In other words, military, social and political history are as inseparable as the United States turned out to be.

Coleman's influence is felt beyond the walls of the museum too. She co-chaired Richmond's Monument Avenue Commission, charged with investigating what to do with the Confederate statues on the city's landmark boulevard. So far, in her battle against the all-too-human instinct to wish the past were simple, Coleman is winning. And though an expanded museum still won't be able to tell every element of the story, that doesn't mean she'll stop trying. —LILY ROTHMAN

NORTH CAROLINA

Meherwan Irani

BRIDGING DIVIDES

BEFORE MEHERWAN IRANI opened Chai Pani in Asheville, N.C., in 2009, he wasn't even a chef. But in less than a decade since quitting his sales job for the restaurant business, the India-reared Irani has developed a mini empire of restaurants in North Carolina and Georgia that expand the scope of Indian food in the South with innovative takes on snacks and street food—think kale *pakora* and spiced-lamb sloppy joes. He has taken on local tradition too, opening Buxton Hall Barbecue, a paean to the eastern Carolina style of smoked meat, with pitmaster Elliott Moss. And Irani teamed with a cohort of Southern chefs of Indian origin to create the Brown in the South Supper Series, which brings together rising names such as Asha Gomez, Cheetie Kumar and Maneet Chauhan for a fundraising meal merging the ingredients of the American South and the cultures of South Asia. —MAHITA GAJANAN

TENNESSEE

Fawn Weaver

DISTILLING CREDIT

SLAVERY WAS THE BACKBONE of the South's economy until the Civil War, though many contributions of enslaved men and women have only just started to be recognized. Entrepreneur Fawn Weaver has made sure at least one critical piece of the history is not forgotten. Her quest began after reading a 2016 article about Jack Daniel's distillery in Lynchburg, Tenn., in which parent company Brown-Forman acknowledged that, contrary to company lore, Jack Daniel learned how to distill whiskey from an enslaved man named Nearis Green. Little, however, was known about the man behind what has become one of the world's most prominent booze brands. So Weaver got to work, piecing together roughly 10,000 documents to tell his story: his name was in fact Nathan "Nearest" Green, and he'd been on loan to the minister who long got credit for teaching Daniel his craft; when Daniel bought the company, Green stayed. In May 2017, the brand officially recognized Green by naming him as its first Master Distiller, and Weaver has launched her own venture: a whiskey called Uncle Nearest. —OLIVIA B. WAXMAN

JOHNATHON KELSO

SOUTH CAROLINA

Stanfield Gray

STARTING UP THE SOUTH

AS FOUNDER OF the DIG SOUTH Tech Conference, Stanfield Gray is making sure his part of the country doesn't get left behind in the digital revolution. Gray says his two kids helped inspire him to leave the world of strategic communications and pursue the idea back in 2012, because he didn't want them to grow up feeling like they "basically had to leave the state" in order to succeed in the startup world.

From humble beginnings—the conference was launched out of Gray's garage in Charleston, with about $20,000 in Kickstarter funding—the confab grew to attract more than 2,000 attendees in 2018. Although a visit to Charleston is part of its

Kevin Lee, left, and Pierre Thomas have built Quality Control Music into the South's leading hip-hop label

appeal, Gray aims to put a spotlight on the entire area. By forming bonds among tech hubs in cities from Chattanooga to Raleigh, he thinks the region can compete with the likes of Silicon Valley. "Our mantra is 'Succeed in the South,'" Gray says. —K.S.

GEORGIA

Kevin Lee and Pierre Thomas

FORGING A HIP-HOP COMMUNITY

KEVIN "COACH K" LEE and Pierre "Pee" Thomas are more than just co-founders of one of the most influential indie record labels in the U.S. The Atlanta-based hip-hop moguls and heads of the label Quality Control are talent scouts, community mainstays and rap tastemakers, ushering local stars like the rap trio Migos to the top of the charts—and helping amplify the Atlanta sound as hip-hop's dominant force over the past decade.

Lee and Thomas made their name by spotting talent early, relying on their deep roots in the Atlanta scene: recent signee Lil Baby wasn't even a rapper when Thomas noticed his potential, developed it and turned him into a rising star. That local-first approach has made them hugely influential in their hometown, and in turn, they've passed support along to causes like get-out-the-vote campaigns. They've made sure to incubate their connection to Atlanta—which Lee calls "the blackest city in America"—while looking ahead to developing projects beyond the realm of music. "We take our time," Lee notes of their process; they may be trendsetters, but what they do is "built to last." —R.B.

LOUISIANA

Cyndi Nguyen

REPRESENTING GENERATIONS

VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANTS BEGAN concentrating in New Orleans after Saigon fell in 1975, but for decades they largely kept to isolated communities along the Gulf Coast. In recent years, however, younger generations have become increasingly involved in the fabric of New Orleans. That growing influence is embodied by Cyndi Nguyen, who in May became the Crescent City's first Asian-American city council representative. Nguyen, who as a child immigrated from Vietnam with her parents, is the co-founder of a nonprofit that aids non-English-speaking communities in the region. She says her election shows that all kinds of people can come together in New Orleans. "Even though I didn't look like the majority of people, I care deeply about people in the community," Nguyen tells TIME of her district, which is more than 80% African-American.

She beat an incumbent councilman amid an insurgent wave in 2017 as New Orleans voters chose their first female mayor and a diverse city council. Nguyen says she is honored to be a "first"—but mostly she's eager to get to work promoting economic development in the area. "There's great potential for this district," she says, "and it's not because I'm in the seat; it's because of the people." —A.A.

'OUR MANTRA IS "SUCCEED IN THE SOUTH."'

—Stanfield Gray

KENTUCKY

Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson

BUILDING ART

LOOKING FOR A WAY to launch a business that could help revitalize downtown Louisville little more than a decade ago, Kentucky natives Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson realized they could solve another problem at the same time: a way to share their own substantial art collection. The result was the 21c Museum Hotel, featuring art galleries that are free and open to the public. The first location opened in their hometown in 2006, just in time to capitalize on a resurgence for midsize

This photo of one city's justice-system leaders appeared in the Atlanta Voice *and then went viral*

Southern cities. The couple have since opened eight hotels throughout the South and Midwest, all with a design-focused aesthetic and distinct sense of place. Under chief curator and museum director Alice Gray Stites, the hotels have hosted work from artists such as Kehinde Wiley, Kara Walker and Cindy Sherman, offering visitors and residents alike a chance to see—or spend the night with—some of the country's most provocative contemporary art. —SAMANTHA COONEY

'IF WE DON'T DO THIS, THEN THE AMERICAN DREAM IS REALLY IN JEOPARDY.'

—Nicole Hurd

GEORGIA

The South Fulton Eight

TEAMING UP FOR JUSTICE

SOUTH FULTON HAS only been incorporated for a year, but it has already made history. Situated 12 miles west of Atlanta, it's the first U.S. city in which almost every leader within its criminal-justice system is a black woman. That aligns with the demographics of the town, which is about 90% black, but are an anomaly in a country where only about 8% of state judges are women of color, according to the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy. A photo of eight of the town's leaders—city solicitor LaDawn Jones, court administrator Lakesiya Cofield, public defender Viveca R. Famber Powell, interim police chief Sheila Rogers, clerk Kerry Stephens, chief judge Tiffany Carter Sellers, clerk of the court Ramona Howard and clerk Tiffany Kinslow—went viral this spring.

Amid what can feel like a barrage of depressing news stories about the obstacles faced by African Americans and women, the image captivated Americans far beyond the borders of the small town. But the women of South Fulton said recently that they want to be sure their influence doesn't stop at a photo op. In their courts and jails, Sellers has said, their goal is to seek justice for all while being an example of "how to do things right." —MAYA RHODAN

NORTH CAROLINA

Nicole Hurd

PUTTING COLLEGE IN REACH

WHEN NICOLE HURD launched an advising program in 2005 as a dean at the University of Virginia, she wanted to help underserved students with the college application process. It quickly became clear that her help was needed on a much larger scale. She expanded the program, moving to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to develop what is now College Advising Corps, through which recent college graduates now serve as advisers in 646 high schools across 14 states. Having helped an estimated 300,000 students enroll in college since 2005, the corps announced a goal this year of enrolling 1 million students by 2025. As low-income students continue to face steep barriers to higher education, Hurd has framed her mission as fundamental to the country's future. "If we don't do this," she has said, "then the American Dream is really in jeopardy." —K.R.

In Elvis We Trust

By Ace Atkins

We need Elvis now more than ever.

Growing up in Georgia and Alabama in the 1970s and '80s, I always felt that the bad old days of Southern prejudice and ignorance had passed, that we were entering a new South built upon hard-won racial equality, charity and the sense that no one was better than anyone else. The country had a long way to go, but if the South had come so far in just a generation, then nothing could stop progress.

I'm not so sure anymore. Lately, I feel like our moral compass has been broken, spinning to intolerance, greed, hypocrisy and a meanness that's as thick as the humidity in July.

In times of trouble, I put my faith in Elvis Presley, who represented the South's better angels. He was a hard worker, and although he lived the high life, he never forgot that he had been born into poverty. I don't think you'll ever hear an interview with the man when he didn't express gratitude and humility for all that life had given him.

And he was a self-made talent, perhaps the greatest entertainer of all time, born in a two-room shack in Tupelo, Miss., in 1935. I've been to that small shotgun house many times, reflecting on what it says about America. Greatness can be born anywhere.

Elvis was famous for his generosity—ultimately to a fault—giving away cars, expensive gifts and other handouts to anyone who needed a leg up. That's how the Presleys survived the Depression. His father Vernon was a laborer who was often out of work, and the Presleys relied on the kindness of family and neighbors to get them through the hard times.

Vernon and his father and brother had built that two-room house themselves. As tiny as it seems, it ended up being too nice and expensive for the family to hang on to. When Elvis was young, the Presleys lost it, and they ended up shuttling around Tupelo, often living in black neighborhoods, where Elvis famously developed an ear for black gospel and blues to supplement his love of the old-time gospel he knew from his own church.

The house still looks like a shack. But it was nicer than what many other families in Tupelo, in Mississippi and around the South had in 1935.

Politicians had a hard time demonizing the poor in the 1930s and '40s. That doesn't seem to be the case today. Today demagogues and charlatans court Southern crowds with messages that exalt the rich and powerful and dismiss the poor and marginalized as being somehow deserving of their fate.

And the crowds gobble it right up. They believe that their problems could be solved if only the poor people below them didn't ask for so much. To blame an immigrant for "stealing" a job, instead of the CEO who won't pay a living wage.

Elvis knew what it was like to be dirt-poor, to struggle for food and shelter. By the time his talent helped him buy a Memphis mansion with golden-edged mirrors and thick white carpet, he was already using his money to help others, often quietly and with no fanfare. He didn't create a foundation and then use outside donations to buy a larger-than-life painting of himself. He just went out and bought that lady a Cadillac. Got that fella a job.

I still believe in my heart that most Southerners are still more like Elvis than the President. We are most likely to pull over and help someone stranded on the roadside. Most of the people I know in my Mississippi town would give you the shirt off their backs. Most Southern preachers don't spend Sundays in the pulpit spewing hatred and intolerance. Most people agree that racism and white supremacy are evil. Even preschoolers know it's always better to tell the truth and take your lumps than lie and evade.

And yet here we are. We know right from wrong, but most of us down here voted for wrong. As Elvis once said, "Truth is like the sun. You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't goin' away."

Atkins' latest book is The Sinners

"Even preschoolers know it's always better to tell the truth."

SOUTH FULTON EIGHT; REGINALD DUNCAN—CRANIUM LLC; ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

ARKANSAS

Samuel Rivera Lopez

ACTING FOR EMPOWERMENT

SAMUEL RIVERA LOPEZ was 17 when, in 2015, he founded a group called Stitches to encourage his fellow teens to use art to get involved in the community. A year later, University of Arkansas professor David Jolliffe saw the Mexico-born Lopez speaking about his experiences and asked him to help with something new: the LatinX Theatre Project, created to give voice to the stories of the growing Hispanic population in Northwest Arkansas. Lopez and other teens wrote poetry and raps about their journeys as immigrants, which artistic director Ashley Edwards turned into a play. "Sam is a great connector," Edwards tells TIME. He helped the project's founders find Latino artists and starred in its first show, and Lopez says the performances quickly sparked a dialogue in the community. Now Lopez is using the lessons he has learned to help teens beyond the theater, and the LatinX Theatre Project is looking to help other teens like him continue telling their stories. —A.A.

TEXAS

Michael Sorrell

REINVENTING EDUCATION

WHEN MICHAEL SORRELL was asked to take over as president of Paul Quinn College in Dallas, there were 15 abandoned buildings on campus, the school had seen four presidents in as many years and enrollment had plummeted. "The school was 135 years old. It had survived Reconstruction. It had survived Jim Crow," he tells TIME. "I thought, Please don't let me be the thing that kills it."

So the school's leadership adopted a new mantra: grow by meeting the needs of the community they served. Gone was the football team, with its field becoming a farm that could feed its neighborhood and provide student employment as part of the school's urban-work college model. Now, about a decade later, Sorrell is looking to expand. In July, the school announced the location of its first satellite campus. In August, it will break ground on its first new building in over 40 years. And by requiring students to work and use part of the paycheck to offset their education, Paul Quinn has cut the cost of attendance by $10,000. Along the way, Sorrell became one of the most innovative leaders in his field. "If you're Catholic, you have Notre Dame. If you're Mormon, you have Brigham Young. If you're a black woman, you have Spelman," he says. He wants students from under-resourced communities to know that they, too, have a place. "We're going to create a seminal experience for the students who are coming to college today." —M.R.

'EVERYBODY ALIVE WANTS TO FEEL PROUD OF WHERE THEY'RE FROM.'

—Chuck Reece

NORTH CAROLINA

John Herrera

BANKING ON IMMIGRANTS

AFTER THE 1996 ATLANTA GAMES, many of the Mexican laborers who built the Olympic Village drifted north to North Carolina, following a building boom. They were often paid in cash—which created its own problems. "People knew the easiest way to get cash was to rob a Mexican on payday," says John Herrera, who was then working at Duke University in Durham. "People were easy targets, walking ATMs."

Commercial banks had little incentive to cater to the workers: their accounts were modest, and getting them required bilingual staff. So Herrera helped found the Latino Community Credit Union, which 18 years later has 12 branches and $300 million in assets. Staff teach financial literacy to clients who don't always know how the U.S. banking system works and help them through the paperwork to pay taxes properly. *It's a Wonderful Life* has been updated, with a native of Costa Rica in the Jimmy Stewart role. "We're building our institutions and integrating ourselves," says Herrera. "We are the nation-builders, immigrants are." —K.V.

GEORGIA

Chuck Reece

RAISING THE BAR

THE BITTER SOUTHERNER was originally conceived as a cocktail blog. But when he fell upon the title—"it's like a quadruple entendre"—Chuck Reece realized he had found a vehicle for something bigger. Every TV show and magazine about the region seemed to feature either debutantes or rednecks. This site could do everything else.

"We decided a bitter Southerner is somebody who loves this region but also is willing to acknowledge and not gloss over the many difficult pieces of its history," says Reece, who from Atlanta in 2013 launched an enterprise "for and by a community of anyone who's ever felt like a misfit in the South." The result is an online magazine that tells unexpected stories (think an essay on #MeToo that merges Atlanta and Paris) and wins awards—including two James Beards for food writing. The URL is brandished by expatriate Southerners and transplants to show the folks in the North. "It comes down to: Everybody alive wants to feel proud of where they're from," he says. "It's just harder down here." —K.V.

Never Meet a Stranger

By Julia Reed

Doe's Eat Place, the restaurant founded in 1941 in my hometown of Greenville, Miss., has reached legendary status among foodies the world over for its superlative steaks cooked on a mammoth open broiler, its hot tamales (which bear little resemblance to the Mexican tamale) and its atmosphere. Doe's was founded by second-generation southern Italian immigrant Dominick Signa and is now run by his sons and grandsons.

Doe's is indeed a classic, but one could make the case that it is also a microcosm, or at least an instructive emblem, of the town itself. Greenville was founded in 1824 and is situated smack in the middle of the 7,000-sq.-mi. alluvial floodplain known as the Mississippi Delta. Like the rest of the Delta, it was literally hacked out of a dense, uninhabitable hardwood forest by planters who had made their fortunes elsewhere and were eager to get at some of the richest soil in the world. Those early settlers were joined by a surprisingly cosmopolitan mix of folks. When Greenville was incorporated, just after the Civil War, the first elected mayor was Jewish, as were the owners of the first businesses and the founder of the first school. Since 1900, the majority of the citizenry has been African American, but there are sizable Syrian and Lebanese populations as well as large numbers of Chinese (who built the railroads and levees and stuck around to open grocery stores) and southern Italians (who were brought over as indentured servants to pick cotton during one of our many shameful periods).

So it was that "Big Doe" Signa (who had tried his hand at bootlegging) sold his still for $300 and a Ford Model T and turned his family's grocery store into a honky-tonk and takeout joint offering up spaghetti, chili and the hot tamales. Located on Nelson Street, the city's unofficial African-American Main Street, it was part of a bustling scene that included late-night barbershops, sidewalk craps games, more than a dozen Chinese groceries and so many blues clubs that it has been compared to Memphis' Beale Street.

In an arrangement that turned segregation on its head, the African-American customers came through the front door, while the occasional white customer entered through a side door into a back room. Within a few years, the back room, or "eat place," became so popular that Big Doe shut the tonk and developed a "menu." While there has never been a written version, regulars know that it consists of the original chili, tamales and spaghetti, along with fried and broiled shrimp, hand-cut french-fried potatoes, salad and garlic bread, in addition to the steaks.

During Mississippi's civil rights upheavals, Greenville served as something of a safe harbor. (Senator LeRoy Percy had united locals against the Klan as early as 1922.) Not long afterward, when my father Clarke Reed served as chair of the fledgling Mississippi Republican Party, he and his close friend Hodding Carter III, editor of the Pulitzer Prize–winning *Delta Democrat Times,* used Doe's as a base from which to entertain national reporters in town to cover the rise of the state's nascent two-party system. Stories in the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* soon followed, but the restaurant remained unchanged. Customers who wanted booze continued to brown-bag it—the state was officially dry until 1967.

Big Doe retired in 1974 (he died in 1987), and these days the steaks are mostly cooked by his grandsons Charles Jr. and Doe III, who stand on the same worn, grease-stained floorboards in front of the same red-hot broiler. Their 92-year-old great-aunt Florence still occasionally turns up to make the salad, and the hot-tamale formula remains the same. Such is its importance to the restaurant's DNA that when Doe Jr. married his wife "Shug" (short for Sugar), his father warned him never to reveal the recipe to her lest she leave him for someone else.

He needn't have worried. More than 40 years later, when the family gathered onstage in New York City to accept a James Beard Foundation honor, Shug took the mic and tried to explain to the crowd what Doe's is: "People come together, never meet a stranger—it's the American way."

Reed's new book is South Toward Home

"His father warned him never to reveal the recipe to her lest she leave him."

ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

Arts Council

A young woman skates in front of an LGBT Pride booth at a music festival in Berea, Ky.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MEG WILSON

THE MANY SOUTHS

A CHANCE TO RESHAPE AMERICAN LIFE

By Jon Meacham

THE DINNER HAD BEEN PLEASANT, THE CONVERsation congenial. On a spring evening in 2016, in a private room in the capital of a Southern state, the governor—a Republican, a native and a longtime vote-getter—was asked what, exactly, was happening to his party. The state's primary had taken place not long before, and an interloper—Donald Trump—had crushed a GOP field that included conservative candidates from typical Sunbelt favorites like Florida and Texas. The governor shook his head. "Turnout was what's so amazing," he said. Precincts, particularly rural ones, that usually produced a handful of primary voters had been swamped with supporters of a thrice-married libertine from New York. "Folks just came out of nowhere," the governor said, a tone of marvel in his voice. "I thought I knew this state cold. I thought I knew the South cold. Now—well, now I'm not so sure."

He was surprised by the swerve to Make America Great Again; other politicians in the South are equally puzzled by a millennial influx that has turned significant sections of places like Nashville into tiny Brooklyns with a drawl. More than a century and a half after Appomattox and more than 50 years after Selma, the South is in flux, its complexities and ambiguities deepening as the region offers a pronounced reflection of the rest of the nation. Easy to caricature but difficult to categorize with care, the South is home

MY FAVORITE PLACE

JOE SCARBOROUGH

Our family regularly traveled north from Atlanta on I-85, racing past Gaffney's giant peach across the heart of South Carolina's High Country. The transformation of Greenville from a sleepy town into an international automotive and aerospace hub is an example of how free trade and ethnic diversity points the way forward for the New South.

SCARBOROUGH IS A CO-HOST OF MSNBC'S *MORNING JOE*

FAITH HILL

On Highway 49 in Florence, Miss., just outside of Star, Donna's #6 Produce has been run by one family for 42 years. Donna's ice cream is the best. Even after I left home, Donna and her family checked in with my parents and made sure they had fresh produce—and they still do that today for my dad.

HILL IS A GRAMMY-WINNING SINGER

to the blues and the Klan, to burgeoning civil rights memorials and neo-Confederates, to deep faith and terrible violence, to great affluence and unspeakable poverty. Perhaps it's the heat, but for some reason Southerners are given to extremes, and we can see vivid manifestations of the elements that are shaping American life at large in the 21st century.

THERE'VE BEEN TOO MANY "New Souths" in the view of the late novelist Walker Percy. "One of the first things I can remember in my life was hearing about the New South," he wrote 40 years ago. "I was 3 years old, in Alabama. Not a year has passed since that I haven't heard about a New South … my definition of a New South would be a South in which it never occurred to anybody to mention the New South."

With apologies to Percy, we can't help it—nor should we, given that so many of the forces in the national soul, from race to commerce to culture, have found their most dramatic expression in the chunk of America ranging from Virginia to Texas. The region is an ever unfolding case study in the tension between past and present. As the novelist and ex–Confederate cavalryman George Washington Cable put it in an 1882 address at the University of Mississippi: "Our life had little or nothing to do with the onward movement of the world's thought. We were in danger of becoming a civilization that was not a civilization, because there was not in it the element of advancement."

A critic of Jim Crow and of white resistance to accepting the implications of the verdict of the Civil War, Cable was largely ahead of his time and soon left the South to spend the rest of his life in Massachusetts. His story is emblematic of a perennial Southern phenomenon: long decades of stasis followed by periods of rapid change, nearly always compelled by national forces.

And so it is today. The segregated Old Confederacy languished until the middle of the 20th century; it was only after World War II and the court decisions of the Earl Warren years that the Cotton Belt truly became the Sunbelt. From military spending to the space program in Texas, Alabama and Florida, federal investment was key, and states that embraced an integrated future thrived. The growth of the information economy can be detected in cities from Raleigh to Austin; the globalized world of commerce (at least before Trump's tariffs took hold) in BMW's presence in upstate South Carolina, Mercedes' in Atlanta and Volkswagen's in Chattanooga, Tenn.

The task at hand is determining whether the flow of new people into the South will accelerate changes in patterns of work, politics and culture. Put another way, will a diverse Austin affect Arkansas? Can Atlanta shape Augusta? Will Nashville, with its rising wealth and left-of-center politics, convince Tennesseans in red counties to think anew and act anew, to borrow a phrase from Lincoln?

Close observers aren't sure. In some cases, the new blood and new jobs have turned large pockets of deep-red states at least a shade of purple. But the arc is no given. Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, a Republican finishing his second term, has noticed that a number of recent arrivals aren't coming to change things—they're coming to savor them as they are. "Many of our most conservative citizens are people who have come here from a more liberal state," he says. "They originally came because they wanted to live in a place with lower taxes and a lighter government hand. Once here, encouraged to find that they were no longer in the minority, they have found their political voice and become some of our most engaged political participants." Old times here, in other words, are being kept top of mind, not least by the freshest faces in the neighborhood.

All of which has made the South yet again an active front in the wars for the fate of the nation. Alabama already has one Democratic Senator, and two of the most competitive campaigns in the country are unfolding in Tennessee and Georgia. Driven by the growth in the Washington suburbs, Virginia has proved reliably blue in the last three presidential elections, and Florida is likely to remain the most important of swing states into the foreseeable future. The bottom line: Southern politics are far more fluid than many people believe, and even the slightest uptick in Democratic strength in the South could portend far greater gains elsewhere.

IF THE SOUTH can come to grips with its tragic past—if more people, say, visit Bryan Stevenson's new lynching memorial in Alabama than acquire MAGA hats—then the region has an opportunity to advance redemption in a country torn asunder by tribalism.

"A Southerner may still hope that someday the Southern temper, black and white, might yet prove to be the sociable yeast to leaven the American lump," Percy wrote in 1965. "Indeed, he may suspect in his heart of hearts that the solution, if it comes, may have to come from him and from the South. And with good reason: the South, with all the monstrous mythologizing of its virtues, nevertheless has these virtues—a manner and a grace and a gift for human intercourse … It may well come to lie with the South in the near future, as it lay with the North in 1860, to save the Union in its own way. Given enough trouble in New York and Chicago … it might at last dawn on him, the Southerner, that it is not the South which is being put upon but the country which is in trouble."

At which point a newly enlightened South may rise again—as a force not for ill but for good.

Meacham is a historian and author whose biography of Andrew Jackson was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. His latest book is The Soul of America

Prairie Escape

By Lauren Groff

Nearly every morning in Gainesville, Fla., I tie on my sneakers and go for a run through my quiet neighborhood to the Hawthorne bike trail, then into Paynes Prairie for a wake-up jolt of beauty.

Early in the morning, the light catches the fog rising up from the ground and the moisture hanging on the tips of the grasses, highlighting it all in gold. Clumps of damp Spanish moss hanging from branches above my head shine like dimmed lanterns. A fox or a deer trots across my path and vanishes into the pines and palmettos; a rat snake, a single shining muscle, lies in the sun and blocks my way; strange birds whir in the air above my head. I never go more than a few miles from the busy downtown or University of Florida, but as I run I feel as though I've been transported in time hundreds of years to a pre-automobile, pre-air-conditioned Florida, a place of infinite strangeness and menace and possibility.

It can seem odd to imagine that there could be a prairie in Florida, which many people assume to be a state mostly made of beaches and swamps and orange groves and condominium complexes. But a prairie there is, which the great Quaker naturalist William Bartram visited and marveled at in 1774, writing, "Now on a sudden opens to view an inchanting scene, the great Allatchua Savannah. Behold, a vast Plain of water in the middle of a Pine forest 15 Miles in extent & near 50 Miles in circumferance, verged with green level meadows, in the summer season, beautifully adorned with jeting points & Prometoryes of high land." Bartram visited a Seminole village at Cuscowilla—now Micanopy—and was given the derisive nickname Puc-Puggy, or Flower Hunter, for his habit of preserving and drawing botanical specimens. Most historical

accounts agree that the prairie was later named after a Seminole chief called King Payne who was killed in 1812 in a skirmish with colonizing European Americans.

These days, Paynes Prairie covers more than 21,000 acres of Florida savanna, dotted here and there with forested rises called oak hammocks. It is shot through with canals and even a body of water called the River Styx, which feels appropriately dark and mystical. The Alachua Sink is a giant basin of limestone that drains the overflow of water collected by the savanna into an underground river, sending it miles in the dark before pumping it into the Santa Fe River. There's a visitor center at the Alachua Sink with a beautiful wooden boardwalk where you can walk out into the prairie itself and catch a glimpse of the alligators sunning themselves on the banks of the canals. When the water is low, the gators seem terrifyingly thick and rubbery and unnaturally still, as though they're mimicking blown semi tires on the side of the highway. Once in a while, you'll see two alligators fight, or a single, hungry one creep slowly toward one of the long-legged birds—cranes, ibises, egrets or herons—that wade in the shallows. If you're lucky, you will see one of the bison that wander the prairie; even luckier and you'll see the wild horses that are the descendants of the caballos brought by the Spanish, the first Westerners to colonize Florida. All the while, as you stand there looking across the flat expanse, the air is thick with the calls of thousands of birds flying and fishing and nesting in this great, green, humid roil of irrepressible life.

For the first five years that I lived in Florida, my morning run saved me from despair. We live in Gainesville because my husband took over a family business, which in some ways is a gilded cage: lovely and secure, but a decision you can't ever back out of. For far too long, I felt trapped in a place that was alien to my sensibilities, a place that had never been of my choosing. But over time, the run in Paynes Prairie led me to pay ever closer attention to the natural world around me, to mark the subtle changes from day to day, the more operatic and ravishing ones from season to season. Because I am a novelist, one thing I know very well is that close, sustained, careful, daily attention is a profound form of love. I pay close daily attention to Paynes Prairie—it is the very best of the wild, teeming state that I adore—and it has become the place in Florida I love most of all.

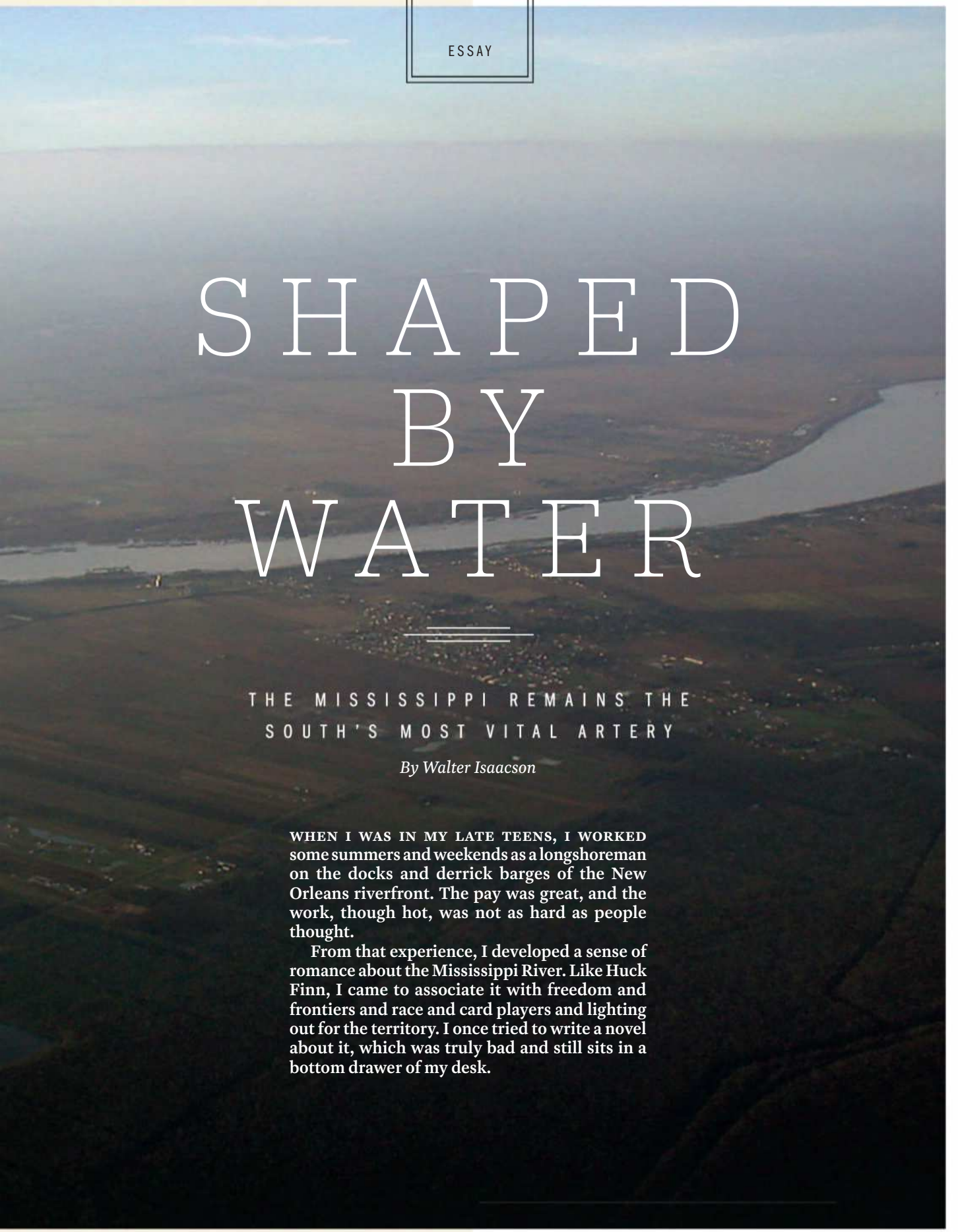
Groff's latest book is Florida

"This great, green, humid roil of irrepressible life"

SCARBOROUGH: ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE T. WEBSTER FOR TIME; BIRDS: ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

The Mississippi River, seen here north of New Orleans, feeds into the Port of South Louisiana, the largest port in the U.S. Port workers here have higher average starting salaries than workers in the tourism sector

PHOTOGRAPH BY STACY KRANITZ



SHAPED BY WATER

THE MISSISSIPPI REMAINS THE SOUTH'S MOST VITAL ARTERY

By Walter Isaacson

WHEN I WAS IN MY LATE TEENS, I WORKED some summers and weekends as a longshoreman on the docks and derrick barges of the New Orleans riverfront. The pay was great, and the work, though hot, was not as hard as people thought.

From that experience, I developed a sense of romance about the Mississippi River. Like Huck Finn, I came to associate it with freedom and frontiers and race and card players and lighting out for the territory. I once tried to write a novel about it, which was truly bad and still sits in a bottom drawer of my desk.

During my last year as the editor of this magazine, in 2000, I indulged this romance by taking a group of writers and editors on a two-week boat trip down the river from Missouri to the Louisiana swamps to produce a special issue on what we called "the river of dreams." One of the main things we saw was how communities all along the river—from Hannibal to St. Louis to Memphis to Natchez to New Orleans—were drawing on this romance to attract tourism. In an age of big-box stores and Amazon, with manufacturing in decline, the river towns of the South were exposing every brick of every warehouse and building to create quaint shopping and entertaining experiences.

IN A WORLD THAT IS BECOMING LESS COMFORTABLE WITH DIVERSITY, IT WOULD BE NICE IF EVERYONE COULD SPEND SOME TIME AT A BIG RIVER PORT

In New Orleans, the Esplanade Avenue wharf where I once worked as a kid is being converted into a music and performance venue to draw visitors from nearby Frenchman Street and the French Quarter. The levee walk in front of Jackson Square, where I proposed to my wife, has just been upgraded into a magical promenade. And in the newly gentrified Bywater and Marigny neighborhoods, rotting docks have given way to Crescent Park, a ribbon of gardens and bike paths and art installations and performance spaces.

NOW THAT I HAVE moved back to New Orleans, I have become less mesmerized by the romance of the river and more respectful of its gritty reality and the economy it supports. Earlier this summer, I took a boat ride to look at the facilities of the Port of New Orleans. We embarked at a spot that embodied the tourist elements of the riverfront, next to the sprawling convention center where the Essence Festival was in full swing and a warehouse that now houses a float-filled attraction called Mardi Gras World.

But within minutes we were exploring the container terminals and break-bulk facilities that make the combined ports of New Orleans and South Louisiana, the latter of which boasts the largest in the U.S. in terms of tonnage. Huge amounts of the nation's grain goes through these ports, as does most imported steel, coffee and rubber and exported poultry, plastic resin and petrochemical products.

There's something noble about the economy of the port, especially in an era when good-paying middle- and working-class jobs are in decline. Unlike tourism and hospitality, which create many jobs but most at comparatively lower wages, the average salary of the workers in port jobs is $63,000, or 35% higher than the average for other local jobs.

In addition to decreasing income disparities, jobs at the port and elsewhere on the Mississippi River tend to decrease racial inequalities, something that Huck and Jim on their raft would have appreciated. Even in the early 1970s, when I worked on the river, there was a rule of the local longshoremen unions and stevedoring companies: all crews formed each morning, whether they were working the docks or barges or tugboats, would have an equal number of black and white members. It spread to other sectors. The doctors and dentists who served the longshoremen health plans, for example, had to take both black and white patients. It led my grandfather to partner in his practice with Dr. Andrew Young Sr., whose son became the noted civil rights leader.

The commerce and constantly flowing mix of people help create a worldliness and an appreciation for diversity that is sometimes lacking in more inland and insular towns. The foods have more ingredients, the music has more influences, and the accents have more inflections, especially if you're within a horn blast of the Port of New Orleans. In a world that is becoming less comfortable with diversity, it would be nice if everyone could spend some time at a big river port.

We devote a lot of energy, especially in places like New Orleans, thinking of ways to increase tourism. That's fine. But we also need to focus on nurturing and improving our port. Like other ports, it suffers from our national inattention to critical infrastructure. The money spent on seemingly mundane things like new cranes and terminals will generate jobs in local port-related industries and also enhance distribution for the agricultural and industrial products from the 40% of America whose shipping needs are served by the Mississippi.

AT THE END of my boat ride past the port facilities, I saw the work that is being done to divert some of the river sediment so it can help restore the disappearing marshes and wetlands of the Gulf of Mexico. That, too, is necessary to protect the commerce and shipping needs of the nation.

Both the commerce carried by the river and the nutrients it brings to our coast reminded me of an analogy that was at the heart of both the art and the engineering of Leonardo da Vinci. He said the body of the earth was like the body of a human, with the rivers serving as the arteries that bring nourishment to us and the earth around us. That is why so many of his paintings, culminating with the *Mona Lisa,* show a river coming from the ancient mountains in the background and seeming to flow into the body and arteries of his human subject.

"I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river is a strong brown god," the St. Louis native T.S. Eliot wrote. As he tells us in *The Dry Salvages,* we should not merely romanticize the Mississippi. We should also respect it.

Isaacson is a professor of history at Tulane University and a best-selling biographer. His most recent book is Leonardo da Vinci

A Place for Us All

By Silas House

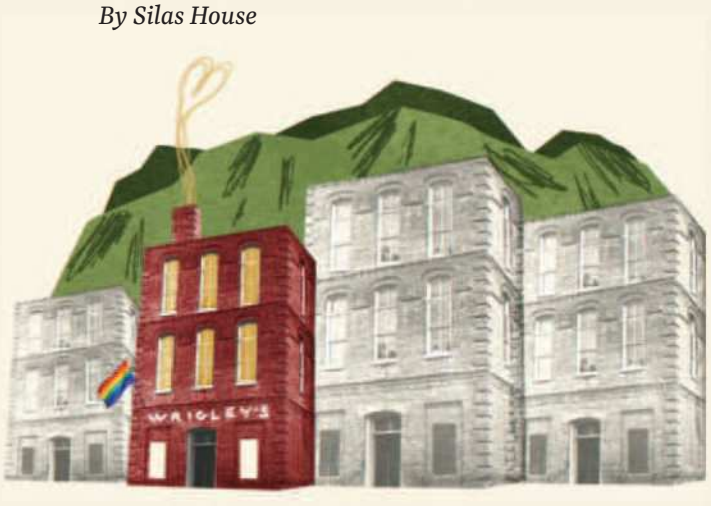


ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

When I was growing up near Corbin, Ky., in the 1980s, the little town was still grappling with a shameful event that had happened decades earlier. In 1919, a mob of white men had driven nearly 200 black railroad workers out of town. The local paper vehemently criticized "the terrible calamity," and some white families sheltered black residents, but many were forced out at gunpoint. Corbin became widely known as "a sundown town"—a place where African Americans were actively unwelcomed—well into my childhood.

As a little boy, I often went to Corbin's small but active downtown with my mother and aunt. They shopped for clothes at a locally owned dress shop. We ate chili buns at the Dixie Café, and my aunt gave me quarters for the jukebox with instructions to play Bob Seger songs.

By the mid-1990s, coal-mining and railroad jobs were disappearing. Walmart had forced most of the locally owned businesses to close. Empty storefronts lined Main Street. For many years, it felt as if the sun had set on this sundown town.

But an unexpected thing happened on the way to obsolescence. In the early 2000s, city officials legalized alcohol at restaurants and set out to attract small businesses to the faded downtown. Corbin is home to the first Kentucky Fried Chicken, so they built a park featuring a large statue of Colonel Sanders. The town also wanted to overcome the spirit of the 1919 riot; in 2005, the United Methodist Church there made a concerted effort to welcome African Americans displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

As of the 2010 Census, the town was still 97% white. But eight years later, this seems to be changing. This shift is most visible at the Wrigley Taproom & Eatery, in the same building where my mother and aunt used to go dress shopping. One long community-style table runs down the center. The bar features the best old-fashioned I've ever had. The food is local, delicious and inventive.

But the best part about the Wrigley is that it brings together many different kinds of people. There is still a serious lack of diversity in the region, but at the Wrigley on a Saturday night there are Appalasians (Appalachian and Asian descent), Fabulachians (rural LGBTQ folks), Affrilachians (African Americans from the region) and many others. The clientele at the Wrigley is diverse, but so are the employees. Recently the Wrigley hosted Corbin's first ever Pride gathering in a county where 82% of the population voted for Trump-Pence.

Kristin Smith, co-owner and executive chef at the Wrigley, has a simple but fierce philosophy: "Every small town deserves a restaurant they can take pride in, with high-quality food grown by local farmers. Towns that don't are missing our Appalachian history of expressing ourselves through preparing a from-scratch meal." She also believes in promoting relationships through food. "If I can push someone's boundaries through food . . . we [become] unified through a taste that doesn't revolve around politics, just flavor."

Today, Corbin is better known for its vibrant downtown scene than the travesty that happened there almost a century ago. At the Moonbow art gallery, one of the many new shops in town, the most popular items are those emblazoned with artist Lacy Hale's proclamation "No Hate in My Holler." And for all the welcome new blood, the Dixie is also still there, and I can play the latest hits or my aunt's beloved Bob Seger on its Internet-enabled jukebox.

Corbin, like the South itself, still has a long way to go. But the spirit of inclusivity that lives in the Wrigley is infectious. In a region that doesn't always love me as much as I love it, the Wrigley is a place where a rural gay man like me feels safe. That's the New South—and the America—in which I want to live, a place I could have never imagined as a child.

House is the author of Southernmost: A Novel

"The spirit of inclusivity is infectious."

A TIME SPECIAL EDITION

HOLLYWO

ZOMBIES, SUPERHEROES AND HOUSEWIVES MAKE A NEW

Dayo Okeniyi, left, and Ben Robson on the set of Emperor; *other historical films like* Glory *and* Remember the Titans *have also taken advantage of Georgia's timeless landscapes*

OD SOUTH

HOME IN GEORGIA | PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAMELL ROSS

Story by Eliana Dockterman

WHEN *THE WALKING DEAD* STARTED FILMING in Senoia, Ga., in 2011, six stores were open in the 4,000-person town. "It was dying," says Lee Thomas, deputy commissioner of the Georgia film office. That's exactly what AMC wanted. In fact, the creators of the hit zombie show wanted Senoia to look completely dead—no cars on the streets, lights turned off, lawns left unmowed. But by killing the town, *The Walking Dead* brought it back to life.

The production team hired hundreds of crew members from the area. It put up the cast in local hotels. It hired local vendors to serve food, supply lumber and build the sets. By the end of the third season, all 50 storefronts on Senoia's main street were occupied. An entire economy sprang up around *Walking Dead* tourism, including the Waking Dead Café; a restaurant opened by Norman Reedus, one of the show's stars; and tours led by guides in zombie makeup.

While Hollywood remains the heart of the film industry, Georgia has staked a claim as its Southern campus. In 2016, more major feature films were made in Georgia than in California, according to data from the Los Angeles film office. Movies filmed in the area have dominated the box office in 2018, thanks to Marvel Studios' recent migration to the Peach State: parts of *Black Panther, Avengers: Infinity War* and *Ant-Man and the Wasp* were all shot in Atlanta.

Georgia has been working to attract Hollywood since 2008, when then governor Sonny Perdue signed a generous tax incentive for film productions. Thomas says officials lobbied for the measure after the state lost the production of *Ray,* the biopic about Georgia native Ray Charles that won Jamie Foxx an Oscar, to Louisiana. Georgia now offers a 20% incentive on productions of $500,000 or more, plus an additional 10% if the film adds a peach logo to its credits. The incentives are similar to those in states like New York and Louisiana, but in Georgia, unlike those states, the law has no end date.

In 2007, the film industry spent $93 million on productions in Georgia. In 2016, it spent over $2 billion. In the past decade, the tax perk has attracted the *Hunger Games* franchise, the *Fast and Furious* movies and superproducer

Georgia has profited from the recent TV boom: several series and movies film at Tyler Perry Studios, parts of which are still under construction, top; and Pinewood Atlanta Studios, center and bottom; shows like Stranger Things, left, have become pop-culture phenomena and tourist attractions

Lighting stands on the set of comedy Little *overlook the Atlanta skyline*

Issa Rae on the set of Little. *Thirteen-year-old* black-ish *star Marsai Martin came up with the idea for the film about a woman who gets to relive her youth. Martin is executive-producing with Will Packer, who has grossed some $500 million at the box office with other Georgia-based films like* Ride Along, No Good Deed *and* Stomp the Yard.

NeNe Leakes, Porsha Williams, Cynthia Bailey and Kandi Burruss film Season 11 of The Real Housewives of Atlanta, *the most popular entry in the Bravo franchise*

Tyler Perry, who has made the state his base. Television hits like *Stranger Things,* critical darlings like *Atlanta* and reality series like *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* have all set up shop in the capital, often for years at a time. Georgia's government estimates that in 2016 alone, the film industry gave the state a $7 billion economic boost through job creation and tourism.

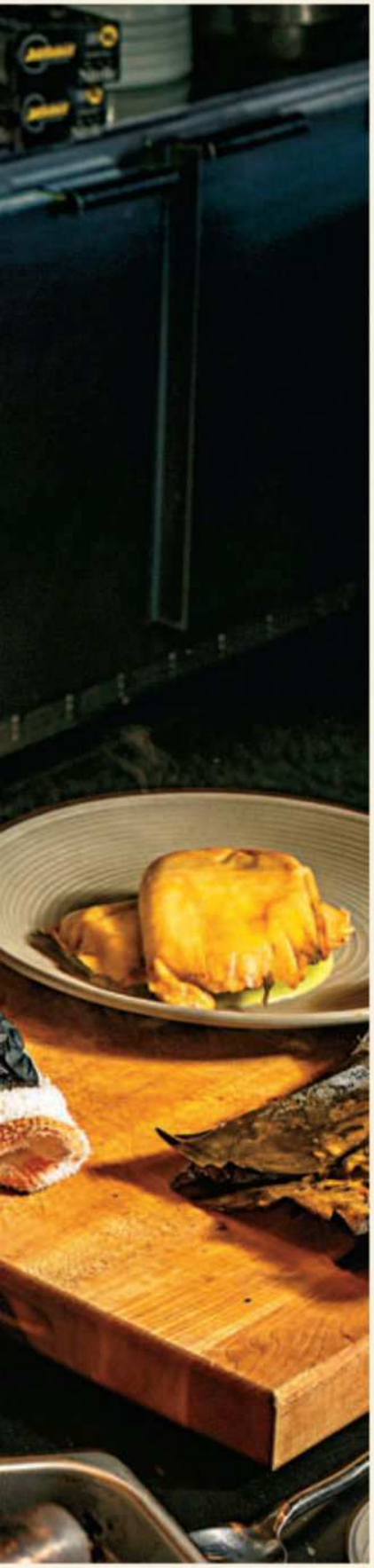
LOS ANGELES HAS the beach. New York City is a concrete jungle. But Atlanta can be Everytown—even a fictional 1980s Indiana suburb. *Stranger Things* creators Matt and Ross Duffer originally wanted to set their eerie show on coastal Long Island in honor of *Jaws* but rewrote their script after visiting Georgia.

"We lost our beach and lighthouse, but we gained this American heartland aesthetic which now defines the show," the brothers told TIME. "We needed suburban neighborhoods that look unchanged since the '80s—Atlanta had them. We needed urban streets and skyscrapers for a Chicago set piece—Atlanta had those. We needed a quarry with a steep cliff—Atlanta had it, less than 10 miles from our soundstages." They're not the only creators who rewrote a script to fit the setting: Edgar Wright revised his 2017 hit, *Baby Driver,* to highlight Atlanta restaurant Bacchanalia, coffee shop Octane and famed music store Criminal Records.

It takes more than tax incentives to lure productions. "It's not enough to just get us here," says *Walking Dead* producer Tom Luse, a Georgia native who began his career as a production manager on the Georgia-based film *Glory.* "The mayor [of Senoia] and state are eager to help, allowing us to shut down bridges and streets and take over towns."

Detractors say the jobs created by productions are low-paying and could disappear if another state offers a better deal. Some worry about the industry's political influence: in 2016, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal vetoed a "religious liberty" bill that was opposed by Hollywood studios as well as other corporations. Still, the state has invested in the industry's long-term growth. In 2015, it created the Georgia Film Academy, which offers training to aspiring crew members and funnels its graduates directly into local productions.

Studios are putting down roots. Pinewood, host to many Marvel films, has built a massive Georgia campus in Fayette County that includes 18 soundstages on 700 acres plus its own Home Depot. The 230-acre, 1,300-residence Pinewood Forest is set to open across the street beginning next year. It's the sort of place that just might attract more superheroes. ◻



Oscar Diaz of the Cortez in Raleigh, N.C., which has become an exemplar of new Southern cuisine

PLACE AT THE TABLE

SOUTHERN FOOD HAS FINALLY EMBRACED ITS MULTICULTURAL SOUL

By Gustavo Arellano

THE SIGNS OF A *NUEVO* SOUTH ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO miss at Jose and Sons, a buzzy restaurant inside a former train depot in downtown Raleigh, N.C. On a window on the side of a door, HOLA Y'ALL flows in a jolly green script, while HECHO EN RALEIGH snakes across the bar in big block letters.

The slogans are a preview of a menu that seamlessly melds Southern and Mexican classics—think collard-green tamales, pork chops rubbed in *al pastor* spices, pimento cheese enlivened with *chicharrones*. "We're not being 'authentic' Mexican, we're not being 'authentic' Southern," says the 32-year-old owner, Charlie Ibarra. "It's just who we are."

Who they are is emblematic of a titanic shift in how the South views itself—and how Americans are finally beginning to view the South. Over the past 30 years, the most racially fraught region of the U.S. has been reshaped by an influx of immigrants. Of the 10 states with the fastest-growing Latino populations between 2000 and 2011, nine were in *el Sur*. The South's Asian-American population, meanwhile,

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKE BELLEME FOR TIME

totaled 3.8 million in 2010—up 69% since 2000—the largest increase of any minority group. Many of these new arrivals mitigated the tensions that appeared in the best way they knew: through food.

In the process, immigrants and their American-born sons and daughters have helped transform the perception of Southern cuisine into something beyond biscuits and gravy and mint juleps. Southern food is now kebabs in Nashville's Little Kurdistan, one of the largest enclaves of Kurds in the U.S. It's Greek diners across Alabama and Ethiopian restaurants standing next to Salvadoran *pupuserías* in Virginia. In rural towns that have seen their populations decline, it's the Chinese or Mexican restaurant that took over former greasy spoons while preserving them as de facto community centers. And in reborn urban centers, it's the Michelin-approved fine-dining restaurants where chefs have fused techniques from India, Laos and Nigeria with the staples of the Southern canon.

Grilled swordfish with salsa verde at the Cortez, where chefs prepare seafood with Mexican techniques

These developments may not mesh with the moonlight-and-magnolias stereotype, but they are far more reflective of the Southern table as it's actually laid. "Immigrants are adding to what the South is," says Jose and Sons chef Oscar Diaz. "There's this beautiful painting, and we're adding more beautiful colors. Because it's not a finished piece."

THE DIRTY SECRET about Southern food that many of its most prominent champions never bothered to share with the rest of the country is that it has been multicultural from the start. Corn was the first Latino staple to cross the Southern border. Spanish conquistadores brought the low-and-slow tradition of barbecue, which they took from the Caribbean natives they killed on their path to the New World. Enslaved Africans used food to resist the eradication of their culture and created the foundation of Southern cuisine, both through their labor and recipes.

Some of the most celebrated subgenres of Southern cooking—Cajun and Creole in Louisiana, the low-country cooking of the South Carolina and Georgia coast—came from ethnic groups that found succor in their cuisine from a hostile mainstream society. Throughout the 20th century, small groups of immigrants from Europe, Asia and Latin America rewarded the South with new dishes—muffuletta sandwiches in New Orleans, hot tamales in the Mississippi Delta, yok-a-mein in Virginia—that became regional delights.

All of this rich history, however, tended to get whitewashed in the national conversation about Southern food. "Food media always found the white celebrity to talk Southern food," says the soft-spoken Jose and Sons owner Ibarra. "Now you have a wider representation. It's great to be quoted, [rather] than have someone talk about your food for you."

Ibarra's story exemplifies the evolution of Southern food. He was born in Southern California but moved as a 7-year-old to North Carolina after his immigrant father and uncle got an opportunity to open a Mexican restaurant in the Raleigh-Durham area. The Ibarras were from a region in the Mexican state of Jalisco that found its American Dream through dining dynasties. Families opened restaurant chains throughout the South to the point that people from the village of San José de la Paz own more than 540 restaurants alone. "I can eat across the South for free by just visiting my cousins' restaurants," Ibarra says with a laugh.

Ibarra's family opened their restaurant at a time when immigrant entrepreneurs had to both downplay and overstate their ethnicity. The decor was all sarapes and piñatas, but the food was watered down to attract customers. To this day, one of the most popular Mexican dishes across the South is ACP (arroz con pollo), a Latin American classic morphed into something most Latinos wouldn't recognize: rice and chopped chicken drowned in a cheese sauce that usually tastes of a cross between Velveeta and paste.

"That was the reference point to an entire genre of food," Diaz says. "But people are becoming more educated about food, little by little."

Ibarra opened Jose and Sons, named for his father and brothers, in 2013. Helping him was Diaz, who was raised in Chicago and initially tried to cook straightforward Mexican food in the South. The 36-year-old classically trained chef re-examined his approach after too many customers said he wasn't doing their queso dip right, a dish Diaz had never heard of until he moved to Raleigh.

"So instead of me being all bitter about people saying, 'You can't do this and that,' I decided that I was going to put my fingerprint on something," Diaz says. "So I started to mix grits with masa [the corn dough that serves as the base for tortillas and tamales]. It got us thinking."

Ibarra and Diaz found so much success with Jose and Sons that they were able to open the Cortez, an ambitious, seafood-focused restaurant, late last year. They now see themselves as ambassadors for their prismatic view of the South. "I'm repping not just the restaurant; I'm repping Raleigh," Diaz says. "I'm repping Latino culture and American culture. I'm repping the South."

In this way, immigration is not just introducing new cuisines to the South; it's also redefining how Southern food spreads far beyond the Mason-Dixon line. Consider Vietnamese-Cajun crawfish houses. They're roughly the same as at any spot on the bayou: butcher paper on tables; bibs around necks; and smiling, messy faces. But Vietnamese-American chefs use Asian herbs like lemongrass and Thai basil instead of Old Bay and Zatarain's, and drown the mudbugs in flavored, hot-sauce-spiked butter.

The distinctive take on a regional delicacy has found an audience outside the traditional precincts. Food writer Mai Pham remembers having to drive 30 minutes to try such a spot when she moved to Houston in 2001. A few years later, she returned to Orange County in Southern California and found a Viet-Cajun restaurant just like the ones in Texas.

Now Viet-Cajun crawfish houses are all over the U.S., from Los Angeles to New York City. And there's something poetic in Vietnamese Americans' serving as ambassadors to the South through seafood. Many refugees who settled along the Gulf Coast in the 1970s went into the crawfish and shrimp trade, only to meet fierce resistance from white fishermen who accused them of stealing their jobs.

"The importance of the immigrant contribution cannot be overstated and has been hugely influential in dispelling parochial Southern views," Pham says. "The fact that we've been able to take a traditionally Southern dish and make it ours—and to have it recognized as its own genre and specialty—we've now contributed to the genesis of an emerging culinary tradition."

THANKS TO THE EFFORTS of these boundary-crossing chefs and eaters, the New South is everywhere. Nigerian-born chef Tunde Wey holds pop-up dinners from New Orleans to Memphis that challenge Southerners on their privilege; in one headline-making case, Wey told white customers they could pay $12 for their lunch or the menu price of $30, while nonwhite diners paid $12 and could get the extra $18 from any whites who paid $30, all as a lesson on the racial wealth gap.

Signs in Spanish line the break room at Kentucky Cooperage in Lebanon, Ky., one of the largest independent makers of whiskey barrels in the U.S. At Snackbar in Oxford, Miss., executive chef Vishwesh Bhatt takes Southern standards like hush puppies and okra and gives them an Indian spin. Elegant takes on *aguachile,* a ferocious bowl of raw shrimp marinated in chilled lime juice and spiked with serrano salsa, have appeared on menus in high-end restaurants from Charleston to Chattanooga.

Then there's Louisville, home to beloved bourbon makers and the namesake Slugger baseball bat. Con Huevos made history this year as the first Mexican breakfast spot to have its chef nominated for a prestigious James Beard Award. Not far away is 610 Magnolia, where former *Top Chef* star Edward Lee has ridden his Korean-Southern dishes to 10 straight James Beard nominations as Best Chef in the Southeast.

"We are witnessing a reshaping of the food landscape, and it is thrilling to some, obscene to others," Lee writes in his cookbook cum travel guide *Buttermilk Graffiti: A Chef's Journey to Discover America's New Melting-Pot Cuisine.* "And that is when it becomes interesting to me—when that tension between two vastly different cultures creates something new."

No area of the South better represents this than Buford Highway, which crosses multiple small cities northeast of Atlanta. The hundreds of restaurants representing dozens of immigrant traditions, all mixed together like a good gumbo, inspired Anthony Bourdain to describe it as a "veritable stairway to heaven."

As recently as 1993, the vice mayor of tiny Doraville rejected the idea of an "International Village" that would celebrate Buford Highway's immigrants. "That's just not our way of life here," Lamar Lang told the Atlanta *Journal-Constitution.* "Why would we want to attract more immigrants when we got all we want?"

Today Doraville officials collaborate with We Love BuHi, a nonprofit that seeks to celebrate Buford Highway's multiculturalism while trying to ensure that it remains affordable for immigrants. Marian Liou, a Southern California native who moved to Atlanta in 2003 to work as a corporate lawyer, began the effort after an unpleasant encounter at her new job.

Pimento cheese tostones and other dishes at the Cortez, one of a number of new culture-crossing restaurants in the South

"One of the senior partners' first questions to me was, 'Did your ancestors build the Transcontinental Railroad?'" Liuo says. "It took me aback. I've never received a question like that in my life."

But Liou found a warmer reception in the Bangladeshi restaurants and Chinese banquet halls of Buford Highway, and she sees those neighborhood spots as key to charting the future of her adopted home. "It's wonderful that immigrant food is shaping and molding this constantly shifting conversation and understanding about the South," she says. "It's not free from conflict. But we're ready."

Arellano is a columnist for Gravy, *the magazine of the Southern Foodways Alliance, and the author of* Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America

MY FAVORITE PLACE

BRITTANY HOWARD

Sabor Latino, in my hometown of Athens, Ala., has the best tortas. It started as a taco truck and grew into a storefront. Every time I go there, I am reminded that the American Dream is what you make it.

HOWARD IS A GRAMMY-WINNING MUSICIAN

SEAN BROCK

Spending time with Glenn Roberts at Anson Mills, surrounded by the seeds and stories that are reshaping Southern food, is my biggest inspiration.

BROCK IS A JAMES BEARD AWARD–WINNING CHEF

ANN PATCHETT

Percy and Edwin Warner Parks in Nashville. Getting lost in the nearly 3,200 acres of forest and valleys and hills, it's easy to imagine what this state must have looked like a hundred years ago—beautiful.

PATCHETT IS A BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

VERSE

AN ORCHARD AT THE BOTTOM OF A HILL

FOR CLAUDIA AND KENT

By Maurice Manning

Why don't you try just being quiet?
If you can find some silence, maybe
you can listen to it. How it works
is interesting. I really can't
explain it, but you know it when
it's happening. You realize
you're marveling at apple blossoms
and how they're clustered on the tree
and you see the bees meticulously
attending every blossom there,
and you think the tree is kind of sighing.
Such careful beauty in the making.
And then you think, it's really quiet,
but I am not alone in this world.
That's how you know it's happening,
there's something solemn and wonderful
in the quiet, a slow and steady ease.
Whether the tree is actually sighing
is beside the point. It's better to wonder,
you needn't be precise with quiet,
it just becomes another thing.
It isn't a science, it's an art,
like love, or a dog who's pretty good,
asleep in the grass beneath the tree.

Manning, a Kentucky native, is a Pulitzer Prize finalist and author, most recently, of One Man's Dark

On the Bayou

By Nathaniel Rich

In this floating city, water soaks every aspect of daily life—from our car-insurance premiums to our music to our fears of the future—but you can go weeks without seeing it. The Mississippi River slouches behind the wharves that line most of New Orleans' 12-mile length. The oceanic expanse of Lake Pontchartrain is available to anyone who clambers over the levee, but most New Orleanians rarely make it up there. You see plenty of water in a storm, when the sewers jam and the streets become streams. But otherwise it is easiest, and most lovely, to visit the ancient bayou that is responsible for the city's very existence.

Not long ago, Bayou St. John was best known for being a good place to dump cars or bodies, and sometimes both together. But after years of civic cleanups and environmental restoration, it has been polished into an idealized emblem of a lost Louisianne landscape that never actually existed. It comes alive at dusk, particularly in the milder months when the air is sweet and still. Canoes, kayaks, handcrafted pirogues drearily float, observed by the older couples cradling wine in good crystal and the optimistic fishermen who seem rarely to have much success, and seem rarely to mind. Picnickers stake out the live oak by the Dumaine Street bridge or carry brown bags of crawfish to the low stone benches, built into the banks, that are only visible from the opposite side of the bayou. Or they lay towels on the splintered wooden slats of the Magnolia Bridge, built more than a century ago, designed to rotate on its center piling to allow boats to pass. A family of turtles lives beneath it. A little farther up, beneath the Esplanade Avenue bridge, lives an alligator.

The first French explorers to the area, in the early 18th century, wrote that alligators, mesmerized by cooking fires, would crawl out of the bayou to stare at the flames. The explorers squatted in an ancient village of huts thatched with palm fronds, built by the Acolapissa tribe in the 1600s. Two brothers, Bienville and Iberville, discovered the site after being approached, while traveling up the Mississippi River, by Indians offering to show them a shortcut between the river and the Gulf of Mexico. If you traveled around the toe of Louisiana's boot to Lake Pontchartrain, you could follow Bayou St. John to a short portage trail that brought you to the river. The helpful Indians received, for their pains, a hatchet. Bienville and Iberville received New Orleans. The beginning of the portage trail became a settlement, which became the French Quarter.

Almost immediately the settlers prepared the Bayou for habitation, dredging and clearing and straightening. The process continued, with ever greater sophistication and cunning, until about five years ago, when the floodgates that block the bayou from the lake were opened for the first time in decades. As brackish water rushed in, speckled trout, redfish and largemouth bass gradually returned, trailed by herons, ibises, terns, waxwings and parakeets. The reunion of the bayou and lake reflects the city's new way of thinking about its place in the swamp. After three centuries of doing everything to keep water out—building levees, paving over canals, pumping and diverting—New Orleans has decided to learn to live with it. We have no choice. It's our future.

But in New Orleans the past counts more. It has always been a city of transplants but the only way to be a true New Orleanian is to be born here. After nearly a decade, I'm a transplant; a decade from now, I'll still be one. My 2-year-old son is a native. After *momma* and *dada,* his first words were *tuba, drums* and *turtle.* His first canoe trip, first alligator sighting and the first time he quacked at a duck, came on Bayou St. John. On a recent trip to visit grandparents in New York City, we walked to the Hudson River. At the first glance of its broad brindled trunk, about 40 times the width of our local tributary, he yelled, to the wonder, and alarm, of his grandparents: Bayou!

Rich's latest novel is King Zeno

"The helpful Indians received, for their pains, a hatchet."

HOWARD: ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE T. WEBSTER FOR TIME; BAYOU: ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE NELSON FOR TIME

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SLAPSTICK SPIES Mila Kunis and Kate McKinnon run for their lives in *The Spy Who Dumped Me*

INSIDE

THREE PRIVILEGED BROTHERS ARE AT ODDS IN STRAIGHT WHITE MEN

TOM CRUISE SCALES NEW HEIGHTS IN THE LATEST MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE *FILM*

THERE WILL BE BLOOD IN MEGAN ABBOTT'S PROVOCATIVE NEW THRILLER

MOVIES

Mediocre spies, unbeatable friends

By Lucy Feldman

WITH BAD GUYS HOT ON THEIR HEELS, Jersey girls Audrey and Morgan take momentary cover in the bathroom of a Vienna train station. Audrey turns to leave—their lives depend on catching the next train to Prague—but Morgan has something urgent to say. Her best friend just tricked one bad guy and shot another to protect her. "Can we just take a moment to appreciate you?" she says, gripping Audrey's arms. "Woman, you are incredible, and I want you to own it."

Audrey, played by Mila Kunis in the upcoming action-comedy *The Spy Who Dumped Me,* out Aug. 3, always downplays her accomplishments. Morgan, an avowed feminist and aspiring actor played by Kate McKinnon, wants her to stand tall. But the roles are reversed in an interview over breakfast in New York City. McKinnon lowers her voice to share that she was just nominated for a fifth Supporting Actress Emmy for her work on *Saturday Night Live.* (She won in 2016 and 2017.)

"It's not my year, mark my words," says McKinnon, who has gained a loyal following in particular for her hyperbolic impressions of Hillary Clinton, Justin Bieber and other larger-than-life characters.

"You're winning," Kunis says, scooting closer to McKinnon. "This girl is never going to accept a compliment."

The parallels between this real-life friendship and the one in *The Spy Who Dumped Me* are hard to miss. In the movie, Audrey discovers that the boyfriend who broke her heart is a CIA agent on the run. When he shows up unexpectedly at Audrey and Morgan's apartment, the friends fall headfirst into a treacherous international spy game. But the movie diverges from its genre counterparts in one major way: it prioritizes friendship over bloodshed or romance. As Audrey and Morgan stumble across Europe trying to stay one step ahead of the enemy—picking up some impressive spy skills along the way—they always make time to cheer each other on, as did the actors on set.

"I feel very voyeuristic telling you this," says Susanna Fogel, the director and co-writer, "but my editor would call me because when they had their mics on between takes, you would hear these little conversations. We'd listen to audio clips of them telling each other how impressed they are with each other." Fogel observed Kunis take a "big-sisterly role" with McKinnon, who is newer to leading major films.

FEMALE FRIENDSHIP has become something of a hallmark for Fogel, who co-wrote and directed 2014's *Life Partners,* about what happens when one friend gets involved in a serious romantic relationship. She also created the television show *Chasing Life,* about how a woman and her best friend handle her cancer diagnosis.

Director Fogel saw McKinnon and Kunis develop a friendship offscreen

Fogel herself has many friends who, like her, are in their 30s, are not married and don't have kids. "Our friendships are really the epicenter of our social world and emotional lives," Fogel says. Yet the platonic bonds she has seen celebrated on screen have largely been between male friends. "There was that whole class of Judd Apatow male buddy movies," Fogel says. "We just didn't have our version."

Kunis says she signed on to co-star in *The Spy Who Dumped Me* in part because McKinnon was already attached—even though the two had never met. Glancing over at Kunis, McKinnon says she had worried that Kunis would find her too weird. "Did you really think this? This is the first I'm hearing this," Kunis asks. "She's crazy—don't get me wrong—but awesome. She's just, like, a f-cking kook, man, and it's beautiful."

They spend nearly eight minutes

PREVIOUS PAGE: MCKINNON, FOGEL AND KUNIS: LIONSGATE

listing everything they love about each other. Kunis, according to McKinnon, is amazingly normal, considering her level of success in Hollywood, and has a "mayoral quality" about her. McKinnon, as a master comedian, is eerily observant, Kunis says.

"I just look at you and I'm like, God, I want to be more like her," McKinnon says. "And I look at Kate and want to be more like her," Kunis says. "That's what a friendship is," McKinnon says.

One aspect of the script that appealed to McKinnon was the absence of a typical page-75 falling-out scene, where the two friends break apart so they can later come back together in the climax. Instead of manufacturing a conflict between Audrey and Morgan in order to move the plot forward, Fogel filled those pages with scenes of inside jokes and moments when they build each other up as they master new moves like hacking databases and battling assassins.

Both actors can relate to their characters' bond. Each still lives where she grew up—Kunis in Los Angeles, McKinnon in New York—and has maintained lifelong ties with a circle of women. One of McKinnon's childhood friends got married recently, and she cried at the wedding, thinking about how lucky they were to still be connected. "I know what their moms' couches smell like. I remember their landline phone numbers," she says. "I feel like I've been keeping secrets if I don't see them for too long."

"If I killed somebody," Kunis adds, "I have zero doubt that if I called my best friend and was like, 'Hey, grab a shovel,' she wouldn't even ask a question."

HALFWAY THROUGH her grain-and-egg bowl, Kunis drops her spoon and launches into a "rant" (her word). After three female-driven films—*Bad Moms, A Bad Moms Christmas* and now *The Spy Who Dumped Me*—she's feeling "triggered," she says. She's tired of being asked about what it's like to act with other women, and for this film, what it was like to be directed by one. (Fogel is the first female solo director Kunis has worked with.)

"I said as a joke once that there was no yelling," Kunis begins, hands waving. "Never in my 20 years has anyone asked what it's like working with a man. No one goes to Will Ferrell and says, 'Hey, Will Ferrell, what's it like making a buddy comedy?' With *Bad Moms,* I literally was like, 'Oh my God, I can't.' What's it like making a movie that's all women? Gosh, women are 51% of us in this world. It's not like it's a snow leopard coming onto set—it's just a woman."

McKinnon grabs Kunis's clenched hand. "That's another thing I love about you—you're such a f-cking firecracker," she says. "We understand that it's noteworthy now. The dream would be to have it not be."

For her part, Fogel does describe bringing something different to the process as a female director—and she is one of only a few with a studio tentpole out this summer. Threading the needle between two genres, action thrillers and raunchy comedies, that have been long dominated by male creators, Fogel co-wrote the story with David Iserson with real women in mind. "You can have a lot of destruction, but in a realistic female movie, the women are going to be aware of that destruction and apologizing for it," Fogel says, adding that she's never been a huge fan of action-comedies either because the action lacks intensity or the comedy that follows feels like it's in poor taste.

That's not to say the violence in *The Spy Who Dumped Me* is half-hearted: at times, as in an early scene in a restaurant that ends with a death by fondue-drowning, it's as outrageous as the best action movies. Fogel worked closely with her stunt coordinator to try to choreograph scenes that are visceral and intense without triggering images of gun violence that might disturb viewers, particularly in the U.S. "We kind of surprised ourselves as these hyperviolent action sequences poured out of us," Fogel says. "It seemed like there was an opportunity to just play in that sandbox with confidence, and yet always with my perspective being that of a woman."

'If I killed somebody, I have zero doubt that if I called my best friend and was like, "Hey, grab a shovel," she wouldn't even ask a question.'

MILA KUNIS

Even so, Fogel, whose background is mostly in independent movies, had moments of doubt helming a big action-comedy. "When I'd think about it too hard, I'd get really freaked out that I was going to ruin it, lose a lot of people a lot of money and be a big disappointment that ruined it for all women in the future," she says. Now, on the other side of the project—and with buzz surrounding its impending release—she knows everything is O.K. "I hope that women know that they can and should try everything they're interested in—with the confidence that men have had," she says.

As breakfast winds down, McKinnon steals a few last berries off my plate and shares her favorite scene: when Audrey and Morgan are interrogated and frantically spill each other's secrets. (Morgan had lice as an adult; Audrey sold her dad's pills at Coachella.) McKinnon's own friends know too much about her, she says—and it's a good thing: "How could you live if you didn't have that?" ◻

THEATER

Privilege takes center stage

By Eben Shapiro

From left: Stephen Payne vies for a seat on the couch with Josh Charles, Armie Hammer and Paul Schneider. In the play, the three brothers use physical comedy to connect

STRAIGHT WHITE MEN IS DISTINGUISHED BY SEVERAL notable firsts. It's the first Broadway play written by an Asian-American woman. (What took so long?) It's heartthrob Armie Hammer's Broadway debut. (More please.) And it likely marks the first appearance on Broadway of the adolescent male form of play-fighting known as the Titty Twister, which is exactly what it sounds like. (It hurts.)

Young Jean Lee's play is a thought-provoking exploration of the privileges enjoyed by straight white males. It's also a giddy physical romp that's a perfect vehicle for Armie Hammer, who onstage and off radiates a catlike comfort in his long, lean athlete's body. During a recent interview with fellow cast members, he casually slipped off a couch onto the floor, where he stretched out on his back and did a few quick curls before effortlessly slithering back onto the couch. (It appeared as if he were trying to release his lower back.) Throughout the interview, the actors were as physical and playful with one another as they are onstage.

The play takes place over Christmas as three adult brothers reunite at home to spend the holiday with their widowed father. The brothers are each wrestling with their own demons and, to avoid confronting them directly, spend much of their time together reverting to childhood "tomfoolery," as Hammer puts it.

The action opens with middle brother Jake (Josh Charles) intently playing a video game while younger brother Drew (Hammer) torments him with a highly annoying song. Jake studiously ignores Drew, and so Drew's efforts to disrupt him grow ever more intrusive, culminating in a tussle, which provokes Jake to deliver the aforementioned Titty Twister. It gets the play off to a rollicking start.

The eldest brother, Matt (played by the excellent Paul Schneider) is in crisis. The smartest and most promising of the clan, he is living at home, doing temp work. His refusal to take advantage of the privileges bestowed upon him, which include a Harvard education, is maddening to his siblings. "Why is there an insistence to maximize every advantage we have to the best of our ability?" Schneider said in an interview.

In a way, the world has caught up to the play, which first ran in New York City in 2014 at the Public Theater. Playwright Lee says that when the show premiered, most audience members had "zero idea" what it was about. "They were totally baffled by it," she says. At the time, many had never heard the term *privilege* used in reference to race or gender or sexuality. Says Lee: "Now people are much more conversant with these terms and better able to follow and understand the play." □

STRAIGHT WHITE MEN: JOAN MARCUS; ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK: NETFLIX; FALLOUT: PARAMOUNT

What to stream now

By Judy Berman

Orange Is the New Black

Orange Is the New Black has a flair for reinvention. It premiered on Netflix, five summers ago, as a fish-out-of-water dramedy about a spoiled white woman acclimating to life at a minimum-security prison. But Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling) was soon demoted from heroine to just one

MOVIES

Cruise dives and dashes through a fabulous *Fallout*

By Stephanie Zacharek

BEFORE INTERNET CAT VIDEOS, before flip phones, before Beyoncé could talk—let alone sing—there was Tom Cruise. A nuclear blast *might* kill him, but don't be so sure. He's as enduring as the pyramids, and just as impressive. Yet even people who don't care for Cruise often have a weakness for the *Mission: Impossible* movies, and that's as it should be. Their outlandish plots and over-the-cliff stunts are the most suitable delivery systems for his energy and undimmable wattage: he just makes sense in them.

Mission: Impossible—Fallout may be the best *Mission: Impossible* movie since the first, made in the dawn of the cat-Internet age, 1996, by Brian De Palma. Or perhaps it's just the one with the mostest: even by the franchise's extravagant standards, *Fallout* throws off Hope-diamond levels of grandeur. If your recollection of the last entry in the series, the 2015 *Rogue Nation,* self-destructed five seconds after viewing, don't worry. All you need to know about this one is that Cruise's Ethan Hunt and friends—played once again by the eminently appealing Ving Rhames and Simon Pegg, both of whom make Cruise seem more human just by proximity—need to foil the plot of MI6 operative turned anarchist Solomon Lane (Sean Harris), who hopes to mend the world by sowing chaos. Now there's some logic for you.

The plot involves the usual rubber face masks, as well as plenty of double- and triple-crossing and the stealing of plutonium. Rebecca Ferguson's Ilsa Faust, introduced in *Rogue Nation,* returns: she was a foxy-smart presence in that movie, as she is here. One of *Fallout*'s standouts is a fabulously choreographed fight sequence in a mirrored, all-white Parisian men's room involving, among others, Hunt and a CIA tagalong played by the almost obnoxiously elegant Henry Cavill. Their grunts, their high kicks, their showy, arm-swinging punches become design elements. The results are horrible and beautiful at once.

They also represent the great care writer-director Christopher McQuarrie and editor Eddie Hamilton have taken with every action scene here: they're all constructed with brain-surgery precision, not just fed through the usual fast-cutting wood chipper. That means you can follow the movement of a car, a motorcycle, a helicopter or a human body for long, languorous stretches, which should be the point of an action scene, after all. It's typical for Cruise to run a lot in the *Mission: Impossible* pictures, and this one doesn't disappoint. He runs—and runs and runs and runs. No one else runs like this. Cruise is an unhinged stickman, outrunning the devil, the aging process, time itself. He will outrun us all. The most impossible mission is the one that ticks inside him. □

Fallout *may be the best* Mission: Impossible *since 1996—or perhaps it's just the mostest*

Death-defying: Cruise in Mission: Impossible—Fallout

face in a crowd of Litchfield Penitentiary inmates of all colors, shapes, classes, ages and belief systems whose stories were given equal weight.

Season 6, which comes to Netflix on July 27, offers a hard reset. In the aftermath of a riot, prisoners have landed at Litchfield's dreaded maximum-security facility. Confined to solitary cells as federal investigators attempt to isolate the ringleaders, these "riot girls" must decide whether to snitch on their closest friends or to sacrifice themselves. It's a grim start to a season whose comic moments are limited to gallows humor, even once the women filter into the prison's general population.

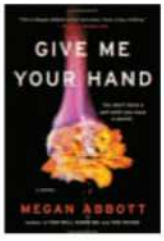
As *Orange* continues to evolve, it's getting harder to imagine a happy ending to its sprawling story. But its bleak mood is necessary, as the show becomes an increasingly dark panorama of the broken American justice system.

AWARDS LOVE
Orange Is the New Black has been nominated for 19 prime-time Emmys over the course of five seasons

PROFILE

The bloody brilliance of Megan Abbott

By Eliana Dockterman



MEGAN ABBOTT ISN'T AFRAID OF a little blood. Her new thriller, *Give Me Your Hand,* is soaked in it. The women wear red stockings and "placenta red" lipstick. Mostly, Abbott writes about period blood, a topic that would strike fear in the hearts of most crime writers.

But Abbott isn't just any crime writer. She earned a Ph.D. from New York University studying noir literature and has built a blockbuster career subverting the genre's tropes. Her murderers aren't femme fatales; instead they're young athletes, ruthless gangsters and, in this book, hypercompetitive scientists. Her victims are always men. It's nothing personal, she explains over cold-brewed coffee at a bakery nestled between Tudor houses in her neighborhood of Forest Hills, Queens. "It wasn't conscious," she says. "But I never wanted to do the clichéd beautiful, mysterious female victim." In *Give Me Your Hand,* the protagonist, Kit, dismisses Ophelia—the archetypal female body that washes ashore to plague the conscience of a lover—as fragile and weak.

Three of Abbott's novels have been optioned for television; her first, Dare Me, *will begin filming in August*

Kit is desperate to join a team of elite researchers but finds herself competing with the one other woman in her lab, a childhood friend with whom she shares a dark secret. They both want to study premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), a debilitating version of PMS with symptoms that include extreme mood swings.

Like many afflictions that affect only women, scientists have done little research on PMDD. Researchers estimate that it affects up to 8% of all women, yet some doctors don't believe women when they complain of its symptoms. Abbott read at least one case when PMDD was used as a criminal defense. "It said so much about the history of women's medicine," she says, "dismissing everything as hysteria, perceiving women's bodies as this out-of-control thing."

Abbott couldn't resist the idea of a condition that could be both an explanation for bad behavior and an excuse that ignores the complexity of female killers. She masterfully mines that gray area to build tension. At one point, a character wonders, "Don't we all feel we have something banked down deep inside just waiting for its moment, the slow gathering of hot blood?"

As Abbott was writing, women's blood emerged as a real-life motif. "During the election, the idea of the female body being monstrous kept coming up," she says. "Trump made the comment about blood coming out of Megyn Kelly, and another about Clinton using the bathroom. Blood can be a metaphor for anything, but at this moment it felt like a metaphor for demonizing women."

ABBOTT SPENDS HER DAYS reading about gruesome murders, plucking ideas for her novels. (This book was partly inspired by a murder at a Yale lab where the victim's body was found in a wall.) So one might expect her to be brooding. But in person, she's bubbly, enthusing over her favorite true-crime podcast *(In the Dark)* and obsessing over women with "big personalities" (lately, Sheela from Netflix's *Wild Wild Country*). She guards herself by refusing to write about serial killers or people who hurt children. She can't spend a year living with those people.

Abbott has written nine novels and become a mainstay on best-seller lists. Three of her books, including *Give Me Your Hand,* are being turned into TV series. She has some experience in television as a writer on HBO's porn-industry drama *The Deuce.* We meet between her calls with producers of the adaptation of her 2012 novel *Dare Me* about which cheerleading-uniform color would look best with a splash of blood: Blue? Pink?

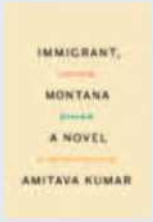
Abbott's last four books were set in high school. For teenagers, especially girls, every breakup or bad grade can feel life-or-death. *Give Me Your Hand* acts as a spiritual sequel: What happens to girls who experience real trauma once they grow up?

Abbott's talent lies in dissecting the complicated tension between women at any age. As Kit's misogynist male colleagues remind her, she's competing with another woman for a job, a contest not all that different from landing the top spot on the cheerleading squad. Abbott excavates the wariness women can feel toward one another to create internal psychological drama. Plenty of blood is spilled in Abbott's book. But the paranoia of whether to trust a frenemy proves even more compelling. ◻

FICTION

Growing pains

Three new releases—set in three different countries—follow characters coming of age as they grapple with culture, class and race. *—Julia Zorthian*



IMMIGRANT, MONTANA
By Amitava Kumar
A young man leaves India in 1990 to attend college in New York City and eventually finds himself engaged by intellectual and romantic pursuits. Throughout this story, inspired by the author's own, the narrator struggles to feel like he belongs.

FRUIT OF THE DRUNKEN TREE
By Ingrid Rojas Contreras
This debut novel switches between the perspectives of a privileged young girl and her family's maid as the two grow up in Colombia during the era of drug lord Pablo Escobar.

BROTHER
By David Chariandy
A sobering account from the present day as well as flashbacks to the sweaty—and violent—summer of 1991 in the Canadian city of Scarborough form this searing novel about the two sons of Trinidadian immigrants who dream of better lives.

NONFICTION

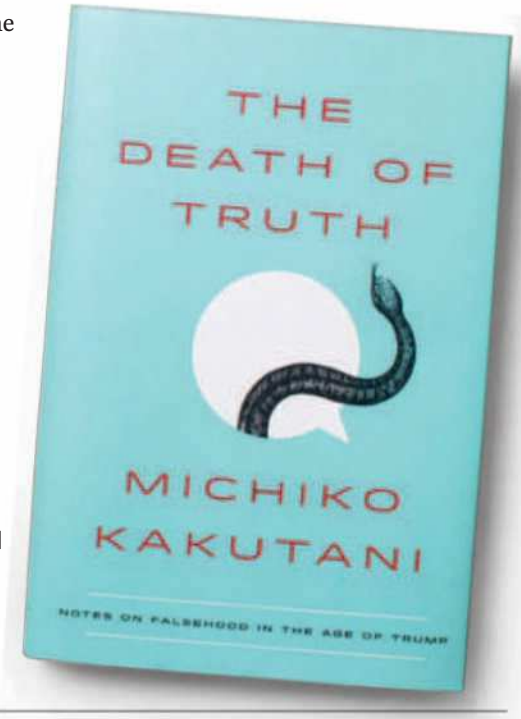
Truth in the post-truth era

By Stephanie Zacharek

PEOPLE WHO READ A LOT, OR EVEN JUST A LITTLE, OFTEN HAVE internal memory banks full of potentially useful facts and quotes, ready to be resurrected brilliantly at a moment's notice—yet still, in the clutch, most of us are like amnesiac squirrels in wintertime, asking, "Where did I put that nut?" Michiko Kakutani is the squirrel who remembers the nuts. Her slender, fiery new book, *The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump,* appearing less than a year after she left her perch as the chief book critic at the New York *Times,* could have been written only by someone who reads more, and retains more, than most mere mortals.

A President who spreads outright lies on Twitter nearly every day, a swath of GOP yes-men who live in fear of crossing Donald Trump's voters, a devious Russian President who has used his KGB-honed wiles to shake the foundation of election systems in several countries, including the U.S.: we live in a world where falsehood and misrepresentation have become the strange new norm. Kakutani's aim is to show how "a disregard for facts, the displacement of reason by emotion, and the corrosion of language are diminishing the very value of truth," and to frame the destructive effect those distortions are having on the U.S. and the world.

In the book's most dazzling section, Kakutani dissects how post-modernism and deconstruction, formerly the dual darlings of lefty academics everywhere, have been co-opted by dark forces on the right. "The postmodernist argument that all truths are partial (and a function of one's perspective) led to the related argument that there are many legitimate ways to understand or represent an event," she writes. Thus, Trump felt perfectly justified lumping violent neo-Nazis in with the peaceful counterprotesters who showed up to stand against them in Charlottesville, Va., last August. There were "some very fine people on both sides," Trump said at the time, after condemning "this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides, on many sides." As a staff critic, Kakutani could sometimes be reasonable—albeit intelligently so—to the point of dullness. In *The Death of Truth,* she shows true, passionate anger, and she comes out and calls 45 by the name some of us are still reluctant to use: liar. ◻



Longtime critic Kakutani released her book in July

ABBOTT: PHILIPPE MATSAS—AGENCE OPALE/ALAMY

FITNESS

Can we hack our aversion to exercise?

By Jamie Ducharme

IT'S 2050 AND YOU NEVER THINK about going to the gym. While your neighbor gets in a high-intensity interval-training workout in her self-driving car on the way to the office, you unlock a public bike and pedal along miles of a safe, traffic-free path to get to work. Throughout the day, your boss holds walking meetings, and you earn extra vacation time by completing health and fitness challenges over an extended lunch break. By bedtime, you will have logged at least 45 minutes of moderate exercise just by going about your routine.

This is what futurists hope our society will look like someday soon. While the federal physical-activity guidelines currently recommend 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity or 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week, plus two muscle-strengthening sessions of any length, only 23% of U.S. adults meet both of these benchmarks, and 45% don't hit either. But scientists argue that Americans' lack of exercise might not be entirely their fault.

Part of the problem really is in our genes: humans are wired to avoid expending extra energy in order to conserve for physically taxing tasks like hunting and reproducing. Modern life also plays a part. The average employed person spends about eight hours a day working, in addition to child care, commuting, household responsibilities and sleep. Add in time for TV and social media, and suddenly devoting even 3% of your week to exercise seems like a herculean feat.

Architect and urban futurist Cindy Frewen says any meaningful effort to get Americans moving will have to focus on societal changes that fall into the six "STEEP-V" categories: social, technological, environmental, economic, political and value-based.

There are nearly limitless possibilities for technology, like those driverless cars outfitted with mini gyms. Wearable tech is already here. Someday soon, hitting 10,000 steps on your Fitbit—or an implanted fitness monitor—could trigger an automatic financial reward from your insurance company. (Many insurers, including UnitedHealthcare and Oscar, already reward members for physical fitness, though typically not in such a streamlined way.) "Right now, we make bad health a cost," Frewen says. "But what if wellness and happiness is actually a profit?"

Considering how much time most Americans spend at work, CEOs could be the most effective motivators. Joyce Gioia, a futurist who specializes in workplace issues, says companies can foster activity through mandatory vacation periods, enforced end-of-day times, remote working and flexible schedules. "Let people take a break for an hour and a half and bike 20 miles, if they want to, and then work until 7 o'clock in the evening," Gioia says. "People can better engineer their lives."

MAYBE THE BEST STRATEGY of all is making exercise so ingrained in daily life that it becomes automatic, says Sagar Shah, the planning and community-health center manager at the American Planning Association. Take Arlington, Va., which topped the American College of Sports Medicine's 2018 American Fitness Index rankings in part because of its exemplary funding for and access to parks, paths and green spaces. Thanks to 49 miles of safe paths, Arlington households make three times more trips by foot, bike or transit than other households in the region, according to a report from the county's transportation and development department.

But Arlington is a wealthy suburb: areas historically populated by lower-income and minority groups tend to be less likely than average to get enough exercise. They may also lack the funds necessary to make exercise easier.

To make the strongest impact on population health, then, Shah says the focus should be on "providing more resources to people who need them, rather than providing equal resources to everybody." Politicians and city planners could easily promote a world where exercise is universal, rather than a privilege of the time- and money-rich.

In 30 years, Elon Musk may be the only one pumping iron in his driverless Tesla. But even for the rest of us, more movement may be closer than we think. Those in power just have to prioritize it. ◻

3%

Approximate amount of your week you'd spend exercising, if you met guidelines

45%

Percentage of U.S. adults who don't hit that benchmark

Employers can help workers improve their health with incentives. Flex time can also mean workday workouts.

GETTY IMAGES

Oscar Mayer

THE NATURAL WAY TO SNACK ON-THE-GO

NO ARTIFICIAL INGREDIENTS

NO ARTIFICIAL PRESERVATIVES

NO ADDED NITRATES OR NITRITES*

DISCOVER A WORLD OF TASTE

*EXCEPT THOSE NATURALLY OCCURRING IN CELERY JUICE AND SEA SALT.

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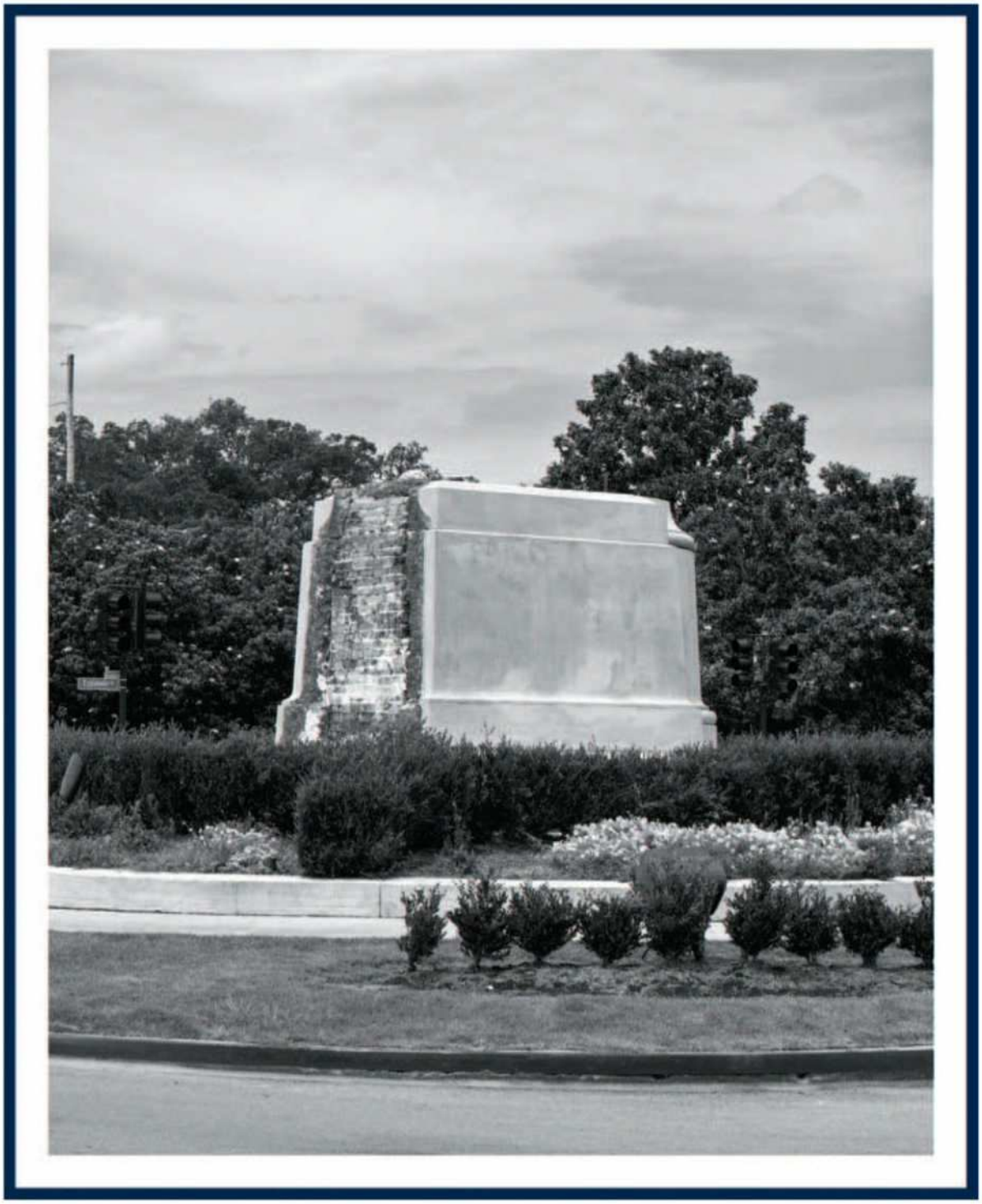

FACING HISTORY

The base of the statue of General P.G.T. Beauregard in New Orleans, unveiled in 1915 to honor the Confederate fighter, and taken down in 2017. The photograph, by Matthew Shain, is part of his series "Post-Monuments." Since 2015, local governments have removed more than 100 Confederate statues and symbols. On July 25, workers began removing the pedestal. The Beauregard statue remains in storage, its public fate uncertain.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SHAIN

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